MISS JANET'S

OLD HOUSE

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"THERE, THAT IS FANNY!" Page 269.

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ANNETTE LUCILLE NOBLE.

AUTHOR OF "HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD," "THE QUEER HOME AT RUGBY COURT," ETC., ETC.

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MISS JANET'S OLD HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

MISS JANET PAGE.

IN a certain street on the east side of New York city, a street running to the ferry, was a brown-stone house, standing in a deep yard and shut in by a tall iron fence. Now, this description suggests an aristocratic dwelling, but no house could be that in this locality. The street was narrow, poorly paved, while on either side were groceries, thriving grog-shops, pawnbrokers, and dirty tenement houses. It was a thoroughfare for every sort of conveyance going to the ferry; a place where goats, hens, children, ragmen

and organ-players mingled in promiscuous activity.

The house itself was large and well built, but passers-by often stopped to look at it wonderingly; for every window pane was gone, the front door was barred, the front yard was full of rank weeds and tall uncut grass. The neighbors had scared their children with stories of crimes once committed there, until they at last believed their own fables. Only a few business men on the street knew the truth; that the place belonged to a queer and miserly spinster, who, for some freak's sake, would neither rent nor sell this property

One beautiful morning in May, a young girl stood in the door of the opposite tenement house, waiting evidently for some one who lingered within; her clothing was of the poorest sort, yet one looked first at her pretty face, her clear eyes, and the red-brown hair waving back from her white fore-

head and curling in delicate rings about it. Poor Jessie McCoy! As she gazed listlessly at the street scenes, something recalled to her the years when she was a tiny girl in Scotland. Like a beautiful dream, she remembered the mountain stream tumbling past their cottage; the shepherd dogs that were her playmates, the great bunches of blue-bells that she used to gather in spring, and later in the year the purple heather—was it all in this same world of work, and poverty, and trouble? The beauty of her life had faded with those blossoms of her baby-hood. In the new country, she found always unlovely surroundings; her mother died; another woman filling her place, did her duty by the child as hard-working, ignorant women understand duty; but Jessie's path had not been over roses.

"Jessie!"

"Yes, mother," said the young girl, turning to hear what some one coming down the

stairs behind her had to say, a woman not over fifty, yet one whose hair was gray, her shoulders bent, and her face old with sickness and trouble.

"What are we going to do? There don't seem to be a place that I can rent for any price we can give. I must not spend another cent for car fares, and my feet won't carry me much farther."

"Stop here and rest a minute. Where can we go now, anyway?"

The two waited in the open door, discussing their affairs as they stood, not heeding a woman who had crossed the road to gaze at the old stone house, and, stopping near them, was listening. When they were about to start, she said: "Are you looking for rooms to live in yourselves?"

"Yes, for cheaper ones than we can find," replied Mrs. McCoy.

"That is my house over there," said the woman, nodding towards the tall dark building.

Jessie, for a moment, thought the speaker must be crazy; but, looking attentively, she saw that her garments were as rich as they were dingy and antiquated. In person, she was short and slight; her hair was perfectly white, her eyes as black and shining as jet beads. She fixed them on Jessie in a sharp, steady scrutiny, while she spoke: "Yes, that house belongs to me. I find that tramps have been lodging there. I can't have that. Are you respectable women?"

Jessie twitched her mother's arm to make her start on, but the woman continued: "Don't be a foolish girl. I know what I am about. If you can prove you are orderly people, maybe I will let you live in two or three of my rooms; just to keep tramps away from the premises. Rent the place I never will."

Mrs. McCoy looked at Jessie quickly. She was half-puzzled, and wholly curious.

"If you think I am not in earnest, come

across, and I will show you that I carry the keys."

Jessie started promptly to follow the little creature, who, turning suddenly, remarked: "You can call me Miss Janet Page."

They crossed the street, dodging an ice cart, and Miss Page unlocked the gate, saying: "It is a mystery how the tramps got in; but they do it—from the rear, probably."

She led them to the front steps, under which she turned to the basement door and unlocked that. They shivered in the damp of the unwholesome lower hall, across the floor of which scampered a rat; but Miss Janet went on up-stairs, and, almost in the dark, they followed, Jessie going first.

"I can't have you on my parlor floor, if only for the name of it," said their guide, pausing, while Jessie peered over her shoulder into the "parlor." Such a place! Stray sunbeams struggled through the battered shutters, and glinted on the dirty walls which

once had been n'cely tinted, but now were stained with moisture and covered with dust and cobwebs. The ceilings showed blackened gilt and fresco pictures. On the floor, in one corner, was tossed a heap of old straw which certainly had been used as a bed.

"Yes, just see that, now! Tramps have slept here, and I won't have it any more. All the locks shall be looked to, and I will provide a dog. Will you treat it kindly?"

"We can't agree to feed it," replied Mrs. McCoy, with the same fancy Jessie had just then, that they must be in a dream; explaining later, "We can't, because often we don't have enough to eat ourselves."

"Is this all your family?"

"No, I have a stepson seventeen, and a little boy; but the big one is no help to me."

"But your little boy can come to me at No. — Forty-second Street every day with the dog, and he shall be fed—the dog," she add-

ed quickly, as if they might suppose she meant the child.

"Now tell me about yourself, and if I find that your story is true, you may move into any of the back rooms on the other floors and stay as long as I see fit, rent free. I've told Baldwin that I never would rent or sell this house. Now, who are you?"

"My husband was a stone-cutter. He died two years ago and left us without a penny. Jessie and I do anything we can find to do. We have made neck-ties lately for a house down-town. I am sick in bed more than half the time. She fetches the work home, so I can help, and it is better."

"Yes, keep her under your eye," said the little spinster sharply, scanning Jessie from head to foot, and then remarking to her sternly, "If you had red hair, a flat nose, and were cross-eyed, you would be better off to my mind, more likely to be a good girl and to earn your own living. Good looks

are worse than wasted on a working-girl. Well, I will send Baldwin to find out about you, and if it is all right, you can move in as soon as you like. I won't have the front door opened, or a front window, and I won't have any liberties taken with a place that cost as much as this once cost."

Jessie was less impressed by these words than was her mother, for she reflected that there was scarcely a whole pane of glass in the front, and could imagine no liberty that had not already been taken with the premises.

"If you can get quietly in and out, can keep tramps from burning the house down, you will satisfy me."

They went on up a flight of stairs with once fine oaken woodwork, past a niche for a statue, picked their way over a heap of plastering that had fallen from the ceiling, and chose their rooms with rear windows. Mrs. McCoy, finding that they could be light and

sunny, suddenly exclaimed, "I'm so surprised I can't take it in; but I think you are wonderfully kind."

"It is not from kindness I act. I was very angry to see that old straw in the parlor—think of it! Then I happened to hear you talk."

"All the same, we are very glad. If we have a roof over our heads, and we are able to spend what we make for something to eat, and—"

Mrs. McCoy could not finish, for Miss Janet hustled them down-stairs without more ceremony, and when they were out in the daylight, only said, "Baldwin will see to the rest; where will he find you?"

When the address was given, she hastened away to the near avenue, and entering an up-town car, disappeared.

Mrs. McCoy, gazing after her, muttered, "Perhaps she is as crazy as a loon, and we'll never hear of her again."

"But she had the house keys, and she told us where she lived."

"It is mighty queer, a house for no rent, and a dog going out to his meals like a gentleman. Well, we'll wait and see. We can't lose, if we don't gain."

CHAPTER II.

MR. BALDWIN AND DOLLY PETERS.

AFTER taking her seat in the car, Miss Janet rode as far as Forty-second street; then alighting, she arrived, after a brisk walk of about five minutes' duration, at a house not unlike the one in the street last described. Everything in this locality, however, betokened wealth and elegance. Only fine horses and handsome carriages passed here, while dainty little children with their nurses thronged the broad, clean pavement. Miss Page entered this house also by the basement, and went at once to the kitchen, where she found her trusted servant, Dolly Peters, in cheerful converse with her man Baldwin—Mr. Baldwin, Dolly always called him, for he

was by no means employed in menial services about this establishment. Almost everything that a man not a lawyer or a doctor could do for Miss Page, Baldwin did. He was a pleasant-faced, middle-aged man, with a drawl, a slight Yankee accent, and a decided limp. After twenty years of city life, Mr. Baldwin retained a sort of simplicity which seemed like rustic inexperience, but he had plenty of shrewdness. Dolly, the only house servant whom Miss Page employed, was a placid, moon-faced creature, with a good sense of what ought to be in a house like this, and the will to carry it out, in her own domain at least. When she opposed herself to Miss Page, as she often had done, the latter found her yielding only in the way gutta percha yields—instantly, softly, but when the pressure is removed, the position of things must be just as before. Her kitchen was a beautiful room for neatness and cheerful brightness of aspect. Her range shone like

black satin, and Baldwin had painted the chimney over it bright red. The oak dresser was gay with polished pewter tea-pots, odd bits of crockery and tomato cans, carefully kept for their outside pictures.

"Miss Page," said Dolly, as the lady glanced disapprovingly at a pan of lettuce on the table, "it is beefsteak day—or it ought to be."

"We eat too much meat. They say hard-working Germans and Poles eat only black bread and coffee; yet see their strength."

"I ain't a Pole, and Mr. Baldwin's stomach don't seem to be after no such foreign pattern, either. Shall I get two pounds?"

"A pound and a half is plenty. Haven't we had meat once before this week?"

Baldwin shook his head at Dolly, who was about to argue the matter, and she merely answered, "No, ma'am, we hain't." Miss Page was singularly stingy. She would have kept herself and her servants on next to

nothing if they would have submitted, but Mr. Baldwin, knowing her great wealth, had long ago decided not to go hungry, and he never feared to make clear his sentiments when he found this necessary.

To him Miss Janet now turned and narrated her morning proceedings. His only response when she ended was a subdued whistle.

"What do you think of putting them in the house?" she insisted.

"Putting them in is easy enough; but what about putting them out?"

"Oh! I can do that any time."

"If they were troublesome, it might be hard for you to turn them out. If they were all right, it would be hard for them to go out on five minutes' notice."

"I never should send them off in any such short order," replied Miss Page, snappishly, and Baldwin made a mental note of the remark. His mistress was so full of freaks,

he always liked to hold her by some promise.

"Here is the number of the house in Second Avenue where you will find them," she added; "their name is McCoy. Find out all about them in some way, and if they are not disreputable, let them settle themselves in my house."

"At once?"

"Yes, right away. O yes, Baldwin, besides that, I want you to provide them with a dog."

"A dog!" echoed Dolly; but Miss Page paid no attention to her surprise. Later she explained her wishes to Baldwin. When she went up-stairs, Dolly exclaimed: "Isn't she a queer one now, to be picking folks out of the streets like that?"

"It is a good thing, on the whole. After somebody has lived inside those walls, she may be willing to put the old place to a sensible use."

"Can you remember when she lived there?"

"Indeed I can! It was just sixteen years ago this spring that she moved out, and I lived there with her four years. She was born in the country, but came to New York as a girl. Her father built that house when it was considered away, way up town, and very elegant. Her brothers and sisters all died there, and she clung to the place until the street got so dirty and demoralized that she could not stand it, then she moved here."

Perhaps that was all Baldwin knew of his mistress's affairs, perhaps he knew more than he told.

"Well, she is the oddest creature that ever I saw. If she moved in here sixteen years ago, why on earth hasn't she found a place to hang up her clothes yet, or a"—

"There, there, never mind, Dolly—a beefsteak is it you want me to order?"

As Baldwin goes out to market, let us

follow Miss Janet up-stairs. We find no dust and cobwebs here, but clean paint, and handsomely finished rooms. Nevertheless one would suppose that Miss Page has recently arrived with all her belongings, and had not been able in the limited time to arrange her furniture. In her front parlor was a bed, in the hall a book-case—not an empty chair or sofa was anywhere visible. Their seats she used as tables, putting there books, papers, lamps, dishes, anything—while over their backs she disposed her wardrobe. Miss Page added her outer garments to the contents of a large rocking-chair; then having nothing in particular to do, she went to look out of her parlor window. She often spent hours there. Dolly thought she was watching her neighbors with childish curiosity. Baldwin used to declare, "She isn't seeing the Vandyke's or the Piersons', she is thinking. When I pass below on the pavement and look up, she stares right through me."

"What is she thinking about, do you suppose, Mr. Baldwin?"

"Oh, she has a choice of subjects, like the most of us, but I reckon it is things past and gone that occupy her."

This morning, at any rate, Miss Page was thinking of her old house. She had lived there; she only ate, drank, and was sheltered by the present abode. That home was always in her imagination, warm, bright, full of cheerful companions. She saw each room with the fine old furniture there in order. Even the old family servants were to her more real than ever Dolly or Baldwin had been; their individual traits were more distinct in her mind. When she seemed to be keeping watch of some caller at a neighbor's mansion, she was very likely rehearsing mentally a family feast, a wedding or birthday banquet. There were no such happy families nowadays, there was no such fine hospitality. Her friends were all dead and

gone. Such commonplace people as were left in the world were probably enduring life as she was enduring it, because she must.

"Miss Page," said Dolly, putting her head inside the door, "I forgot to tell you that Miss Louise Norton was here to call, and left her love for you."

"Bring it here then; I'd like to see how much there is of it," replied Miss Page, sourly.

"She looked like a new-blown rose—a white one," ventured Dolly, who had more sentiment than fat cooks usually possess.

"Then she probably spends all she earns by teaching school in buying finery."

"She said she would come again soon."

"You might have told her my will is made. The fact that she is my second cousin has not prevented my leaving my money to—a lunatic asylum, we will say, for the present."

"What makes you say that now about her? I don't believe she comes to see you for anything but human sort of motives."

"It is very human to count on rich relations—to err is human too, and will be in this case. Did Baldwin let them weigh the beefsteak with the bone in? Tell him never to do that."

"Yes'm," said Dolly, retreating, and wondering meanwhile if ever a steak was brought into this house without that injunction.

Notwithstanding her ungracious words, Miss Page was really sorry not to have seen her visitor. She had so few callers, that one who, like Louise Norton, persisted in coming in spite of cool receptions, such a one made a break in the monotony of life here. Louise was a bright, brave girl, an orphan, and self-dependent. She taught in a young ladies' seminary, and continually vexed Miss Janet by following her own judgment (usually good), by thinking her own thoughts (often original), and above all, by innocently betraying her belief that her wealthy relative

led a life not as satisfactory as her own. She came to see her out of real kindliness, and while Miss Janet would have been very angry, had she, in her heart, actually supposed that Louise was mercenary, it made her almost as vexed that the young girl dared to be perfectly independent, to agree or to disagree with her as she saw fit.

Dolly had scarcely returned to the kitchen when Miss Page heard a ring at the basement door-bell, and soon after some one came up and tapped at the parlor door.

"Come in, Baldwin, and I will give you full directions," called his mistress.

"It is not Baldwin, Cousin Janet! It is I. To-day is a holiday, and I am calling on my friends. I came here once before, but you were not in. Isn't this a lovely cluster of roses? I'll give you half if you have a vase anywhere to hold them."

"Buying flowers is a great waste of money. You pay it out for what will be

perfectly worthless in a few hours," said Miss Page, seating herself in the one empty corner of a sofa and letting her guest look until she found a goblet in which to put her roses. She was a tall, slender girl, tastefully dressed in some cool gray material. Her dark-brown hair was brushed back in an easy coil; her face in repose was childlike, just now a twinkle in her eyes made it mischievous; but let Miss Norton (as her scholars knew her) begin to talk of some intellectual topic, her whole face enkindled, and she became rarely attractive.

"Oh! this is as you look at it," she replied gayly. "When I buy flowers, I buy so very much for so little money. For instance, things went all wrong at school yesterday, and I walked out tired and almost blue. A little ragged boy offered me six great gold and purple pansies for three cents, when I had them. They rested me and made me positively happy."

Miss Page sniffed contemptuously.

Louise went on with simple good nature. "A realization of something new to me came with them. Once there was no such thing as a flower, not a pansy in the whole universe, and God thought of one, a beautiful first thought, before he made it. I went along the street wondering if I had given to me the ability to create a flower, I could have a quite new conception of beauty, could see one in my imagination. I couldn't even fancy a new one."

"Of course not! and such far-fetched notions are irreverent."

"Not to me," said Louise, quietly going on. "I took my pansies home, and all day they reminded me of my tenth birthday. We lived in the loveliest little parsonage then, all overgrown with woodbine, and in the garden were rows of tall white lilies every spring, and I had a pansy bed. That birthday was

full of sunshine and singing birds and pleasant gifts."

"But it is all gone now, and you'll find your life duller every year that you live."

"It is not all gone, any more than the sweetness and the pleasant thoughts go when the flowers fade," said Louise with a tremor of her sensitive lips. How little any one knew how hard she found it sometimes to keep in the sunshine.

Miss Janet looked at her curiously a moment, and then remarked: "If you bought pansies yesterday, I surely think it was needless to pay for more roses to-day, especially if the fine sentiments that come with them are as lasting as you say."

A gleam of impatience flashed in Louise's eye, for she was as high-spirited as she was sympathetic. Then she said, "No. I do not buy flowers every day, by any means; these were given to me. The little boy I bought the violets of, always stands on the

corner of Twenty-third Street. We have a smiling acquaintance. To-day he turned red to the roots of his hair, when he held out these roses, and said: 'Don't buy 'em—take 'em. I saved 'em for you!' I didn't offer him a penny, but we'll make it right hereafter."

CHAPTER III.

MISS JANET'S HOME.

MISS PAGE made no effort, for a while after this, to entertain her visitor, who untied her hat string, saying: "I would like to stay an hour or two. I am tired walking, but you need not be hindered by me. I will take a book."

"Very well, you might as well stay to dinner, if you are here over the time."

Hiding her amusement at this singular invitation, Louise found a volume of Wordsworth's poems rising out of Miss Page's winter bonnet, which, with a pair of bellows, was snugly stowed away under a centre table. Miss Page relapsed into a brown study,

coming out at last to ask, "Did you ever see my old house across town?"

"I did not know you had any other house."

"I have a whole block of houses in Crosby Street," said Miss Page.

"Tenement houses?"

"Yes, and they bring in a good rent, too."

"I hope you keep them in better order than some I read of lately in the 'Tribune'?"

"I am not running charitable institutions. I give as little and get as much as other householders; but the house I speak of is our old home. I never rent it."

Louise looked somewhat interested, and Miss Janet proceeded to give her a dry account of her morning's walk and meeting with the McCoys.

Louise thought the affair rather peculiar, but made no comment.

"Now that I have agreed to let them in, I begin to think I have been very foolish.

Baldwin must go and find out what he can; being women, they will know how to put on a good appearance, any way, I suppose," muttered Miss Page to herself.

"Why don't you go and search them out yourself?"

"I!—oh, I am tired of the whole thing. You go with Baldwin! See where they live and how; a man is not half as quick as a woman. I will pay your car fare going, and returning, you will be right on your way home, where you would have to pay it any way. You won't mind the time if it is a holiday."

"Yes, I will go," said Louise, putting down her book, and at that moment Dolly announced that dinner was ready. Louise was rarely invited to a meal in her cousin's mansion, so familiarity with Miss Page's habits had not wholly blunted the young girl's humorous perception of many oddities. The repast was spread on a magnificent great bare mahog-

any table, polished like a mirror. Every plate was 'odd,' every cup was 'nicked;' there was only one spoon for each, and that was worn thin and dented, as Louise fancied, with the print of the teeth of generations of children.

Baldwin had dared to add peas and strawberries to the bill of fare, an extravagance which Miss Janet openly rebuked when Dolly brought them; but remembering the "whole block of houses in Crosby Street," Louise partook of the frugal meal with an excellent appetite.

"What salary do you get?" asked Miss Page, as the dinner went on.

"Louise replied, "Five hundred dollars, and my board for nine months of the year."

You ought to be laying up money at that rate. Let me see, your board for three months at say five dollars a week would be about sixty or seventy dollars out (and I should be sewing or earning something in play time);

then one hundred dollars ought to cover the rest of your expenses."

"I need rest in vacation. I never found good board for five dollars, and my expenses, when most carefully managed, much exceed one hundred dollars a year. But I hope to put by enough to keep out of the poor-house, should I be taken ill," returned Louise, with just a shade of quiet dignity, which Miss Page was forced to see and respect. She even felt that she had called out Louise's next remark:

"You have said how you would manage my affairs—and sometimes I fancy how I would carry on yours."

"Indeed! What would you do first?"

"I would make every room in this house look as pretty and homelike as it might look if—see the cat, for instance, asleep on that elegant illustrated Shakespeare!"

"'Tis hard for her, that's a fact; she usually prefers my India shawl."

"Dolly makes the kitchen cheerful," suggested Louise, half saucily.

"She says so. She lives there and likes it. I live here and like this."

"Then," continued Louise, daringly, "I would spend my money as fast as I could spend it."

"I'll warrant you would do just that"—

"Yes, I would give Christmas, New Year, and birthday presents to poor children. I would send boys and girls to country homes. I would buy libraries to send out on vessels where the crew would read them. I would pay poor harassed men's debts and give overworked women vacations. I would take sick people to ride in Central Park with a fine carriage and horses, kept for that purpose, and I would—"

"Never mind; no such wild-ideaed creature will ever have the scattering of my money; so in the mean time eat your dinner

before it gets cold. You are very sentimental."

Louise pushed back from her forehead a stray lock of brown hair and laughed: "Am I? Well now, where do the McCoys live?"

Miss Janet told her the street and number, and soon after dinner the young girl started with Mr. Baldwin.

They rode down-town about twenty blocks and then crossed to the tenement house corresponding to the number given.

'You better go slow and stop for breath on every landing," said Baldwin, as entering the first narrow dark hall they began the ascent; a woman in the front door having told them that the McCoy's were on the fifth floor back. The stairs were carpetless, the banisters rickety, the few sickly rays of light from the skylight showed dingy paint and cracked plaster. From behind every closed door came the noise of the sewing-machines,

laundry work, or the voices of children. Some doors stood open, giving glimpses of disordered rooms and rude inmates, who stared at Louise as she passed. At the top of the house they stopped, heated with climbing in the close air.

"How I should hate to live so smothered and shut in," said Louise, under her breath.

"This is a regular palace, compared to some tenements I've seen. Miss Page's don't begin to be as clean or as convenient," returned Baldwin.

At that instant, a door just before them opened, and Louise gave an exclamation of surprise at sight of the little boy who stood on the threshold. He was a slim, fair child, with blue eyes shaded by beautiful black lashes.

"You here, my little flower boy? Do you live here?"

"Yes; but we are not going to live here any longer."

"What is your name?" asked Louise.

"Donald McCoy; Don, everybody calls me."

Baldwin, looking over his head, saw a place having better furniture and seeming neater than any seen below. While he was giving the one quick survey, Mrs. McCoy appeared from an inner room and looked expectantly at him, as if she knew his errand. With a word or two of explanation, he entered after Louise, who set herself quietly to taking notes during the dialogue that ensued between the two. She chatted pleasantly with little Don, and had decided that the woman talked like one struggling hard to earn a respectable living; when suddenly calling "Jessie," Mrs. McCoy pushed open a door near her and summoned her daughter. The latter looked exceedingly pretty, as, blushing a little on coming face to face with Louise, she stood puzzled at the presence of a lady so elegant as she seemed in her dainty

attire. It was instinct always with Louise to tell things in an easy, straight-forward way, if it seemed best to state them at all. So she made known quite simply to Jessie that she had come with her cousin's agent to learn a little more about them than a man would be likely to find out.

Jessie listened respectfully, but with a puzzled expression on her face, which Louise noticed and misinterpreted.

"You don't know what I want," she began; but Jessie interrupted:

"Yes, I know; but it bothers me to tell you much about us, because you see we are nobodies. The landlord here will tell you we are clean, quiet folks, who pay our rent, do not damage his property, and never quarrel with others or among ourselves. Mother is not well; Don earns a little. I am out of a place just now."

"What have you been doing?"

"Making neckties, lately."

A few questions led the girl on to telling how hard it was to find respectable work at any price sufficient to keep soul and body together. Louise was supporting herself, and fancied that she knew something of life; but as Jessie told of her experience, her own life seemed by contrast one of luxury.

"You have a brother, I believe," said Louise.

"Yes, but he is out of work, and not very steady. He is not in the city now—is doing something in Jersey."

"Don seems a bright little fellow."

"He is that," exclaimed Jessie, with animation. He can read beautifully, and I wish we could keep him in school; but he gets along so well selling flowers that mother says he must keep at it for the present. People buy of him when they will not of other flower children."

There was a silence after that which grew a little awkward. Louise thought to herself

that she was not learning much more of the McCoy's than she knew before, and perhaps Miss Janet would not care for her impressions. However, she should not hesitate to say that they seemed to her good enough to let into the old house. By this time, Baldwin had stopped talking with the mother, and had risen to go; so Louise rose also. She was a little surprised to hear Baldwin say: "You can move in, Mrs. McCoy, whenever you see fit, and I should say the sooner the better."

On the way down, he remarked: "They are decent people, and it is far better to have somebody in that house than to leave it to become a rendezvous for thieves. I think it has been occupied by such gentry more than once. I will tell you something, if you will never mention it to Miss Janet."

Louise, who knew Baldwin would never tell her anything he was bound in honor to keep to himself, replied:

"I will not speak of it."

"Well, then, there are two rooms on the second-floor front of that house that are completely furnished with once elegant furniture. Miss Janet shut them up years ago, and she supposes they never have been opened since that time, but they had to be looked into this spring. A detective went to her lawyer and told him he suspected that thieves haunted that house, and that part in particular. Parker, the lawyer, knows Miss Janet like a book, so he said he should not worry her with it, but he sent me with the officer. The place had been entered at some time, but evidently months before, or so the detective said, judging, I guess, from some peach-pits on the floor, with chunks of old bread. There were a few spoons and other plated things scattred around, as if silver had been brought there, examined, and these cast out as worthless, or too nearly so to run any risk with."

"But why were the rooms shut up furnished?" asked Louise, greatly interested.

"Miss Janet knows," returned Baldwin, shrugging his shoulders.

They stood on the corner waiting for a horse-car, and Louise had her suspicions that Baldwin knew, if he had chosen to tell.

"Were they nicely furnished?" she continued.

"Everything had been very handsome, but the windows were broken, and rain and sun had spoiled part of the carpet, the curtains were faded, some small things had, no doubt, been stolen; but it was grand and lonesome, I assure you. I pulled things back from the windows, not daring to have them mended, and then I got a patent lock and fastened it up, sacred to the spooks again."

"How curious!" said Louise.

"If you were not one of the family, Miss Norton, I shouldn't be telling you this; but I reckon you aren't one of the tattling sort. There comes our car."

They entered the car and rode together

for ten minutes; then Louise said: "You can tell cousin Janet that I saw nothing wrong about the McCoy's. The woman seems respectable, if not very forcible, and the girl is quiet and modest. I felt interested in her. There is no use in my going back to tell her this, so I will go home when we turn the next corner."

"Very well, Miss Louise; and beg your pardon for suggesting that you come to see Miss Janet often; I'm sure it must be good for her to have somebody like you to talk with."

"Well, I will gladly come, if you think so. Good-by;" and Louise left him to return alone to Miss Janet, or to find the dog for the McCoy establishment.

CHAPTER IV.

JESSIE FINDS A FRIEND.

THE day after Louise Norton's visit to the McCoy's, she sat in a recitation-room of "Madame Benoit's French and English" school, hearing a dozen or more young ladies recite a lesson in literature. As she looked at them, merry, thoughtless girls, all the children of wealthy parents, and some of them idle and neglectful of every means of culture at their command, she thought of Jessie McCoy. Evidently she possessed as good a mind as any one of these girls, and she was as attractive in person and manner. "I wonder if I could not help her in some practical way," thought Louise, carrying on for

the rest of that hour a double train of ideas. She talked with the class of Chaucer and early English history, she planned to send Jessie helpful books to try and inspire her to be learning something. Moreover, because the most urgent need Jessie had at present was the need of work for support, Louise resolved to get her sewing to do from the Seminary. The girls one and all hated to "mend," perhaps they would pay the McCoys for mending their torn garments. If either mother or daughter did fine washing and starching, she was sure work of this kind could often be supplied them from the school. To think after this fashion was, with Louise, to act. Within the next twenty-four hours she had considerable work engaged for the McCoys, and only awaited a leisure hour in which to go and see them in her cousin's old home.

The opportunity came late one lovely afternoon in the early part of June. Keeping in

mind Baldwin's description of the house, she found it easily enough, although she had forgotten the number. It still looked like a quite deserted place, only that the tall grass and weeds were trampled down. The basement door was locked, but Louise rang a rusty bell, which she heard echo long and loud. Soon there was a patter of feet, and the door was opened by Don, who beamed with delight at seeing Louise, whose sweet face he greatly admired; he led her up two flights of stairs to a large room on the second floor back. Louise glanced down the hall, so dark that she could scarcely see the doors of those closed front rooms; then she followed Don into the rooms chosen by the family.

"Isn't it pretty here!" cried Don, dancing about and looking at her for some expression of admiration. He was quite satisfied at the interest Louise showed, when a moment after, Jessie appeared and led her about to see the place. The walls, windows and paint had

been cleaned. The scanty furniture of the McCoy's had been neatly arranged, and then Baldwin had enriched them to an extent Don thought simply munificent. From the attic he had brought an old hair-cloth sofa, lower at one end than at the other, but very comfortable for use, a number of chairs, tables and other articles, all more or less damaged, yet all available for some purpose. As each had been handsome in its day, the air they gave to the room, when cleaned, was one of "decayed gentility," comical, yet not without something homelike.

"I think Mr. Baldwin is ever so good," said Jessie. "It was enough to let us have a roof over our heads without rent, but he has been here every day or two to find something new for our comfort. Yesterday it was those curtains," and she pointed to the windows where the rosy light came warmly through old crimson folds, a little faded, a little moth-eaten, but far better than none at all.

"Yes, Mr. Baldwin is an excellent man," returned Louise, seating herself by the broad window sill where Don had put carefully a supply of cut flowers for the morrow's sales. He came and stood by her as she sat there, making for her, as she talked, a dainty little bouquet.

"If we can find work now," said Jessie, "everything will be right."

"I have something to propose," said Louise. "Can you sew nicely by hand?"

"Mother sews beautifully. I am more used to a machine."

"Well, if you will come every Friday night to me at the Seminary, where I teach, I can give you the mending to do for at least ten or perhaps fifteen girls; and I will see they pay according to the amount of work done. Can you do fine washing and ironing?"

"Yes, indeed; I can do that nicely. I like it better than doing machine work."

"Well, I can get more or less of that for

you to do for a few weeks, and again in the fall, when the school re-opens."

"I tried this a few months ago, and was doing well, but I gave it up."

"Why?"

A deep color dyed the young girl's face as she replied: "I had to take washing home to lodgings, to people I knew nothing of—I got into strange, suspicious places sometimes, often I was cheated out of my pay, and at last—" She paused a moment before she went on. "I had been washing a few times for a gentleman who seemed rich, and highly respected by the people where he boarded. One day when I took the clothes home he asked me if I had a father, and other questions; then he said: 'What do you do this hard work for?' I said, because I have no choice. I must work for my support and to help take care of my little brother.' He said, 'I can tell you of a much easier way to earn more than you earn now.' I asked him

how, for I really thought he meant to be kind; but all at once the kinder he grew the more I began to wish I had not asked. He said I was too young to have such a hard life, and that if I would let him he would dress me like a lady. I did not half understand until then; for he added, 'Of course, I don't mean I wiil marry you.' I was very angry afterwards, but at the time I was so frightened I could only throw down the bundle of clothes that I had ready to bring away and run down stairs, out of the house and home, with my heart beating as if it would choke me. After that I was a waitress in a restaurant, and I might be there now, perhaps, but for one of the best women I ever knew in my life. She was the bookkeeper. I liked that place; it was very cheerful, there was plenty of good food, and often I had some given me to bring home. A great many gentlemen came there, and they were very pleasant to me. A few clerks began to ask

me if I would go to some place of amusement with them. I asked the bookkeeper if I might go, and she talked to me as my own mother might have talked. She said the restaurant was not a good place for a young girl, and then she found me the work on neck-ties instead. Oh, Miss Norton, if ladies who live so sheltered and safe knew how slippery a way poor girls in New York had to walk in, they would not wonder so much that some stumble into dreadful things."

"I begin to realize that," said Louise; and as she watched Jessie's sunny hair and pretty girlish grace, unspoiled yet by a consciousness of her beauty, she was almost of Miss Janet's opinion that it were better for "a working girl," to have "a flat nose, red hair, and cross-eyes."

"Harry is home now," exclaimed little Don, suddenly; "he came the day we moved here."

"Is he your brother?" asked Louise.

"He is my own brother and Don's half brother. Harry and I were born in Scotland. He was a very bright little boy, but father said he must work, and never let him go to school. After father died, this mother could not control him, and he said he would take care of himself. I am afraid he is a wild, bad fellow; he seldom comes home. He is good to me, unless I ask questions about what he is doing. He never will tell, and he gets ugly then."

From this point the conversation turned on Jessie's recollections of Scotland, and her earliest days in America, when she had gone to a school; then Louise offered to lend her some good books, and by that time twilight had come. Mrs. McCoy had not been home during the call, but when Louise, guided by Jessie, reached the lower hall, she heard voices at the open outer door; one was Mrs. McCoy's, peevish and complaining; one was rough and somewhat insolent.

"That is Harry," said Jessie sadly. "Mother and he never get on well together."

Mrs. McCoy, perceiving Louise, became very meek and polite, but the boy (he was scarcely more than a boy) merely slunk back in the area and stared at her boldly, without removing his hat. He had rather a handsome face, with great black eyes. As Louise passed them with a word to the woman, she heard him mutter, "Who is that? Another of your fine new friends?"

CHAPTER V.

DON'S QUESTION.

IN compliance with Miss Page's request, Baldwin had procured a dog for the McCoys. He was a medium sized Newfoundland, not at all the sort of a creature Miss Janet had in mind, but a good dog, for all that. His bark was tremendous—whether he could or would bite was doubtful. Don loved him with all his heart, and Kaiser, as he was called, made the child's dull life brighter. He knew many tricks, which after a few days' kindness from Don he would perform at the little boy's command. They slept together, and Kaiser soon became a silent partner in the flower business. Every

day the two went together to Forty-second Street, where Dolly fed Kaiser, and did not hesitate to offer Don, apples, cake, or bread and butter.

For a while after the McCoy's entered her old house, Miss Page had ignored their presence there, and shifted all responsibility in the matter on Baldwin's shoulders; but after a time curiosity impelled her to ask a few questions. When she learned that Louise Norton had taken some interest in Jessie, she sneeringly remarked: "She need not think to curry favor with me by petting them, I don't care a snap of my finger for them. I only use them to keep a worse crew out of my house."

She did not see any member of the family for a month or more, until one warm afternoon, when she was alone at home. Dolly had gone out on an errand and Baldwin was also away. Miss Page was at her desk reading some old letters; she seldom received

new letters now-a-days. Suddenly she heard some one knocking on the basement door and the scratching and barking of a dog. It occurred to her that this was a good time to see the McCoy child, and at the same time show no interest in any of them before her servants; so she went down to let in Don.

"Hello Dolly," he cried, without looking up, until Kaiser, instead of bounding forward as usual, began to sniff at Miss Janet's skirts, not knowing her. Then with his big, blue eyes full of surprise and his pretty flushed face growing sober, Don said: "We have come for something to eat—Dolly keeps it for us."

"For us: for the dog, you mean."

"Yes, marm."

"Does she ever give you anything?"

"Yes, marm, most always."

"What for?"

"Why—she asks me am I hungry, and I always am," returned Don, so artlessly that

Miss Page felt that as far as the boy was concerned the reason was a good one; as to Dolly—she would deal with her. By this time Kaiser had pushed past Miss Janet into the kitchen, and was whining for Dolly and the usual refreshments.

"Come in!" said Miss Page, sharply, and Don meekly followed her, timidly balancing himself on the edge of a wooden chair, while she found the tin plate of bones which Dolly had left for the dog.

"You must not grow up a beggar," she said to Don, as Kaiser devoured his food.

"I don't beg. I sell flowers, and some days I earn more than mother—I don't ask Dolly for what she gives me," he added, sagely, concluding that Miss Page had that in her mind.

"If you did ask her you would be a beggar. How do you like your new house?"

"Oh, we think it is splendid. It belongs to the lady that lives up-stairs here, don't

it?" he returned, adding: "She is Miss Norton's sister, I guess; Miss Norton is beautiful."

Miss Janet, perceiving that the boy thought her to be a servant, sat immediately down to catechise him. She asked him everything that she could think of about his mother, sister and brother, and what they said of the house and its owner. She elicited nothing objectionable.

When Kaiser finished his dinner, he suddenly dropped on the floor, stiffened his limbs, and to Miss Page's horror seemed to be lifeless.

"He is only dying for fun," laughed Don, in irrepressible glee; "he does all his tricks for Dolly when he gets his bones eaten."

"Let me see some of them," said Miss Page, curiously.

When Kaiser danced like a clumsy bear, or tried to do it, she had to laugh; when he "preached" by waving one paw and snarling,

barking and moaning long and dolefully, she exclaimed: "I would like just such a dog as this. I guess I will have Baldwin find you another."

"No, you can't have Kaiser! He belongs to me. I won't give him up."

"Hoighty! toighty, sir! Won't is too big a word for a small boy."

Don, who had gotten over his first awe of the queer little woman with such sharp black eyes,—Don took no notice of her reproof, but suddenly remarked, "I saw a picture, a beautiful one in the room next the front door here. The sun shone in right on it. It had a gold frame around it."

"What was it a picture of?"

"A beautiful young lady with long curls and a bunch of white lilies in her hand."

"That was a picture of a young lady whom I knew when she was young."

"I like pictures. Miss Louise said I could learn to draw some day, perhaps."

"There is a room full of beautiful pictures up-stairs."

"I wish I could see them," said Don, reflectively.

"Miss Louise teaches you a great many things, it seems to me."

"Yes, I am in her class in Mission School, now, but she said last Sunday that she was going away for all summer. I like to hear her talk. She goes where there is water as blue as the sky, and high mountains, and beautiful sunsets, better than any pictures, she says, and God made everything that is so beautiful, and heaven is the very best, most beautiful place any one could go to—" Don paused for breath before he added, "Rich folks don't need to go to heaven, do they?—they have beautiful things enough, I guess."

Miss Page was attracted, in spite of herself, by Don. His clothes were poor, but his hands were clean, and his face sweet in its yet unspoiled innocence. She was almost

tempted to give him the ginger-cakes that Dolly had left in the cupboard near the dog's meat, evidently for him, but she compromised with this generous impulse by saying: "Little boy, if you won't touch anything, I will show you some pictures up-stairs."

Don readily promised, and Miss Page tripped up again, followed by the boy and the dog, who refused to stay behind. She led the way to a fine room intended for a library, but never settled. Here, some hanging at random, in good or bad lights, more standing on the floor with faces to the wall, were everywhere fine paintings and engravings. A large, richly colored figure piece held Don captive for a long time. It was the Good Samaritan binding up the wounds of the man who fell among thieves on the Jericho road. He asked so many questions about it that Miss Page, for the first time in years, felt stirring in her a desire to tell some one more ignorant than herself a Gospel

truth. She searched about the room for a great, gorgeously bound Bible, which she knew must be there, and finding it in a velvet case, called Don to her. She was glad to remember that her servants were not home, and certainly Dolly would have been astonished to hear her, as seated in a great velvet chair, she read with the boy, and the dog on a rug at her feet. While she read, she had to explain each point, for it was like reality to Don, who studied with fascinated eyes the figures on the canvas. He discovered in the perspective of the picture the Levite and the Priest, who had both "passed by on the other side," and he must know why they had not helped the sufferer.

"Oh, they were not so very bad, only they did not care," explained Miss Janet.

The artist had given the Samaritan a noble mien and a rare, benignant face, full of "compassion." When the story ended, the

little boy, gazing long at it, and then directly into the woman's eyes, said:

"I would not want to be the ones who didn't care—would you? I think it is better to be kind—but a great many people don't care."

She made no answer, while Don sat silently gazing about the room. Kaiser laid his great head in the child's lap and watched him lovingly. Miss Janet fell into a revery about those people who do "not care—" Yes, the world was full of them. Who cared for her? All the light and sweetness of her life was behind her! Nobody loved her! All these rare pictures were collected to please the taste of dear ones whose eyes were closed on earth forever. Even this great Bible was to have been her family Bible, and she had no family—no near relation left. Suddenly it occurred to her to ask herself if she cared! Was the suffering of others anything to her? While she was putting herself in the place

of the wounded man who needed help, was she not toward all mankind much more like the Levite and the Priest? It was a startling thought, actually the first personal question of the kind that had entered her mind for years— yet Miss Janet Page was a church member, and called herself a Christian.

The shutting of a door in the basement recalled her to the present; and to the fact that Dolly had returned. Hastily rising, she led Don to the door, saying:

"Here, this time I put you out of the front door; but you must never ask to come upstairs again, and you must never tell Dolly that I brought you up to see the pictures."

"Wouldn't the lady who lives here like it?"

"No; run home now"—and pushing out Kaiser with little ceremony, Miss Janet bolted her door in haste, lest Dolly should find her with her visitors. The dog had received his bones, the child had been interested, if he had

gone away hungrier than usual—and Miss Janet herself had received several new ideas. Perhaps these last would remain with her, for she had not much in her barren life to think about.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS PAGE HAS A GUEST.

MISS JANET PAGE had dropped out of what is called society, years before this story begins. She never invited any one to visit her, returned no calls, so at last few people ever sought her out, and fewer still were allowed to enter her house. She did not, however, entirely seclude herself, but had freaks of walking in out-of-the-way parts of the city, or of crossing the ferries and exploring neighboring towns. True, she sometimes shut herself up for weeks together, but her usual disposition was to be exceedingly restless. A few days after Don had visited her she received a call from Louise

Norton, who ran in at noon for a "good-by," as she said, cheerfully.

"Going to Saratoga?" asked Miss Janet, sourly.

"No, I am going to a little country town in Vermont, where board is inexpensive and air, grass and scenery are free. What makes you stay in the hot city all summer?"

"I have to look twice at a dollar before I give it out for nothing. This air is good enough for me."

"I only wish I could afford to take you with me, Cousin Janet. I would show you how to get the worth of a dollar. I don't believe you begin to know its value."

"Well! well!" returned Miss Janet, "which is the greater — the impudence or the conceit of young people now-a-days?"

"Oh, perhaps one equals the other in me," laughed Louise.

Miss Janet, as she talked, was stepping in her nervous way around the room, looking for

something which she had mislaid, when she stumbled over a footstool and hurt her ankle. It pained her during the remainder of Louise's call, yet she refused to believe the hurt to be more than a strain. Dolly bound it up in arnica and water, so it felt better before the young girl went away.

Louise intended to leave the city early the next day, but just about three o'clock, as she was packing her trunk, Baldwin came to the Seminary asking for Miss Norton. Louise hastened to meet him in the reception-room, where he sat with a comical expression on his honest face.

"Miss Janet had to call a doctor, and he found her ankle sprained. She is very much put out of joint in other respects. She says she meant to go to the seaside, and the White Mountains, and very likely to Canada. It is the first Dolly and I have heard of it, but she is going to be awfully uneasy, shut up at home."

"You must get her some crutches and have her hire a carriage and ride every day."

"She can't afford it, Miss Louise; there is a water pipe to be mended in one of her tenement houses."

"I am sorry for her, from the bottom of my heart," said the young girl, earnestly.

"Sorry enough to do something for her?"

"Yes, if I could help her or make her happier."

"Well, maybe you can. She sent me here to tell you that your extravagance worries her," and Baldwin smiled as he went on; "she says, instead of going about wasting your money in strange hotels—"

"I was going to board in a Methodist minister's family."

"Worse yet—you might be tempted to give them a donation!—Well, instead of going anywhere, if you are inclined to come and spend the summer with her, you may."

Louise was silent with dismay. She understood how Miss Janet, accustomed to yield to every freak, was fretted at the thought of confinement. She wanted somebody now to talk with, to scold, to send on errands. No care for Louise had moved her in this invitation. The tempting vision of woods, hills and fields arose before Louise enticingly; then she remembered with real pity the friendless, crabbed old spinster in her disorderly home.

"You actually think, Mr. Baldwin, that I could do her any good? I tell you frankly, I much prefer to go to the country."

"I don't wonder at that. Now I know Miss Louise that your interest in Miss Page is down-right unselfish. You've been told by her often enough, what I'm sure is the truth, that not a penny of her property will go to any friend, near or far. Her home cannot be very attractive to you, but I do be-

lieve if you came there for a while, you might get her out of some of her odd kinks."

"Very well, Mr. Baldwin, you can tell her then that I will come, bag and baggage, to-morrow morning."

Baldwin departed well pleased, and Louise spent her afternoon in reflection.

When she arrived next day in Forty-second Street, she was secretly much amused at her reception. Miss Janet was determined that nobody should suppose that she invited Louise for her (Miss Janet's own) gratification, but that in so doing she had rendered the young lady a great service and saved her much expense. For a few days after her arrival, Miss Janet asked not a favor of her, but bade her "amuse herself," as if she were a child of ten. She allowed herself to be drawn into animated conversations at the table, but the rest of the time she was "busy" in her private apartment.

Louise, with Dolly's help, made herself

comfortable in a hall bedroom which they for the first time furnished completely. When all was in order, Louise exclaimed, "Dolly, I'm going to perform a great exploit."

"What are you going to do—get married?"

"Nonsense, that is very common-place—just come down-stairs and I will tell you."

Dolly followed her down to the room where Miss Janet had read to Don, and the two stood looking around in silence for a moment.

"Why has this room never been put in any sort of order, Dolly?" asked the young girl.

"Oh, I don't know, unless 'twas because Miss Page never got ready to let me do it."

"She never said it should not be done at all?"

"No, marm, not as I remember."

"Well, you call Baldwin, and let us have some fun."

Baldwin came, and it really was "fun" to see the result of this consultation. The three resolved to brave Miss Page's wrath, and to surprise her at night. Like mischievous children, they ran about all day, hiding, tip-toeing, lest they should be heard at their pranks. They laid down smoothly the beautiful velvet carpet, that hitherto had been rolled in the corner; they hung the fine pictures; they arranged the furniture, and Louise, after hours of patient labor, filled every book-case with the volumes that had been unpacked for the first time in years. At six o'clock everything was finished, even to the exquisite bouquet on the table; and a more beautiful room could scarcely have been found.

Louise had just time to make a hasty toilet and refresh herself a little before Dolly rang the dinner-bell.

Miss Janet had found that with a crutch, she could get around the house very well; so

after dinner she hobbled through the hall to stand a moment in her open front door. Louise going behind her, threw wide open the near door into the newly furnished "library." She was a little anxious over what might be coming, for Miss Janet had been cross at the table, and unusually disposed to take issue at trifles. When at last she closed the front door, and turned back, she almost passed the other door without glancing in—almost, but not quite. She stopped and gazed at the books, the flowers, the elegant chairs and sofas—last of all at the painting above the mantle: The Good Samaritan. It seemed to the impatient girl behind her that she never would move or speak. Suddenly the corners of her thin lips twitched, and she murmured: "In the other house it used to hang just where the sunset light struck it in this same way;" then limping to a great chair, she sank down in its depths; and Louise, slipping into a corner, left her to a long rev-

ery, glad that Baldwin had hung the picture in a way to arrest her attention.

"Can you play old music, Louise?" she asked.

"I can play some of that in the next room," replied Louise. "I practiced a little yesterday."

"Well, there is a hymn of Keble there, I believe. My youngest sister used to sing it. The first line is :

"'The heart of childhood is all mirth,
We frolic to and fro ;
As free and blithe as if on earth
Were no such thing as woe—'"

"That is as true as the lines that follow :

"'Too surely, every setting day,
Some lost delight we mourn ;
The flowers all die along our way,
Till we, too, die forlorn.'"

The fine piano in the next room had suffered from neglect, but Louise was able to bring out of it rare, sweet tones, as with fine in-

stinct she chose certain verses from the old-fashioned song-selections.

"Who but a Christian through all life
The blessing may prolong?
Who through the world's sad day of strife,
Still chant his morning song?
Nor shall dull age, as worldings say,
The heavenward flame annoy:
The Saviour cannot pass away,
And with Him lives our joy."

The twilight shadows fell about the dingy garments of the sad-faced woman sitting alone in the beautiful room, but she listened to the music for an hour or more. When Louise came back to stay with her, she said, in a tone so full of something like mingled melancholy and gentleness, that the young girl was as touched as surprised: "I don't believe it—I never knew any one who did it.

'Through the world's sad day of strife,
Still chant his morning song.'

"No, the other verse is the truest:

'The flowers all die along our way,
Till we, too, die forlorn.'"

"You will not think, Cousin Janet, that I have lived long enough to prove out of my own experience that all life ought to get better and happier instead of darker; but I have my own firm belief, for all that."

"Well, what do you believe?"

Louise hesitated a moment. It was not easy for her to tell her best thoughts to one who might be a very cynical listener, but she went on:

"To make the matter practical, as I want to make it:—Here am I with perhaps more than half my life before me, and I ask myself very often how I am going to be able to live the very best life morally, socially and intellectually that God wants me to live; for don't you think, Cousin Janet, it is we ourselves who are satisfied too often with living on a low level, and not God who wants us there? Well, taking our spiritual life first,

we know its fullness consists in loving God and our neighbor. We will love him better, if we are learning constantly more about Him from the teaching of his Spirit which we pray for—"

"I never prav for any such thing," put in Miss Janet.

"From the loving friendship of other Christians—"

"I don't love any particular Christians."

"From all the beautiful things of which this world is full to overflowing."

"All of them are like grass that, as the Bible says, 'in the morning flourisheth, in the evening it is cut down and withereth.'"

"But God gives us all the good of life as it goes, if we will take it as it goes, and He does not mean it to last, for the grand reason that the future will be better because then come the 'things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'"

Miss Page made no comment, so Louise

continued as if she were thinking aloud: "If we love our Father in Heaven we come to love His children everywhere and to really long to help the most lost and wayward of them. Now it seems to me that if I can just go on looking up, knowing that, as the poem says:

> " 'You and I and all men move
> Under a canopy of love
> As broad as the blue sky above:
> That weary deserts we may tread,
> Through dark ways underground be led,
> Yet if we will one Guide obey
> The dreariest path, the darkest way
> Shall issue out in heavenly day.'

"It seems to me there will be a 'morning song,' in every day of our life, and that without putting too great stress on the other things which are better not to be wholly neglected."

"What things?"

"Why, as I said, we are social and intellectual as well as moral beings, or we ought to be. I mean as I live to put myself in con-

tact and in sympathy with the sweetest, the largest, the most cultured people I can know. If they can give me any help toward making myself lovable or attractive, I shall avail myself of it gratefully. On the other hand, what I get I want to share with others, as I have received. You must not think I mean to be a prodigy of learning, if I add that it is a very easy and a very wise thing to be learning something every day, so that when we get old and sit in the chimney corner, younger people will love to hear us talk."

"Some old people sit in solitary chimney corners."

"I always wonder if they need to be alone," said Louise.

She was well aware that every word she had uttered might have seemed suggestive, perhaps to Miss Janet impertinently suggestive. Under other circumstances her first impulse would have been to sympathize with her in this softened mood on the loss of her

early friends and her barren, lonely life. But while she pitied her cousin so much that her tone was very gentle, Louise believed that truth, not sympathy, was what Miss Janet most needed. She was a woman not yet old, blessed with perfect health, entire liberty of action, great wealth, yet she was useless, friendless, morbidly miserable, and very selfish. She mourned only over the happy dead and lived in neglect of the living whom she had every means to help.

"You are young; when you are older you will know more," remarked Miss Page, coldly.

"And that is just my aim, as I have been telling you."

"I understand perfectly well what you have been telling me," exclaimed Miss Page, vehemently; "you think my life is all wrong and my way of living a mistake, so you tell me your pretty sentimental notions, and imagine they will touch my conscience.

You are silly to fancy that. Can you teach me anything about life? I was wading through seas of trouble when you were playing with your rattle-box! No—if you came here to win your way into my affections, to make me throw open my doors to all the world while I say to you—Come, let us enjoy life and spend my money like water, you shall be my heiress some day—"

"Cousin Janet—" broke in Louise's voice: it was soft but very firm,—"Cousin Janet, hear me one moment before you go on! Disabuse yourself, once and forever, of the idea that I have any designs on your money. Do I proceed in the flattering fashion of one who is trying to ingratiate herself in your favor?"

"What did you come for so promptly when I asked you this time?"

"Because I hoped to make your confinement a little less tedious. I like you because you are queer; and as to my opinion of your

way of living, I will give it to you frankly any time. I don't like it. I put this carpet down, for instance, and had this room settled because I thought it very desolate."

"The place I inhabit always is desolate," returned Miss Janet, disarmed by Louise's good-natured plain speaking.

"In one respect you do not do me justice," said Louise. "I am not a child prattling of life. I have had sorrows. I have lost my mother, my father, every near relative. I had a home that was a little Paradise to me, now it has vanished off the face of the earth. I have not gained a place and a chance to earn my daily bread without worry and hard work. I am twenty-four years old—had not you learned a little about life, at that age?"

Miss Janet started as if from a sudden hurt, then with a dry laugh she retorted:

"Twenty-four! Oh, I was ready to be married then, but it came to nothing. Why do you not marry, Louise?"

It was the girl's turn to shrink, but she answered bravely, "I expected to be married three years ago, and with me it has 'come to nothing,' as you say."

The older woman expressed no surprise, and to the relief of the other asked no question. They sat a while silent, only the outline of things about them visible and the room fragrant with the perfume of roses. Suddenly in the darkness Louise felt a tremulous hand rest softly on her head, and her cousin said kindly:

"Don't mind me if I am bitter; I can't help it—I know you are a brave girl—your life won't be a mistake. Go to bed now; I'll stay to enjoy your room a while. It does look better and I like it."

"Thank you," said Louise, only staying to say good-night.

CHAPTER VII.

DON'S LATE VISIT.

WHEN it became known in the neighborhood that the old brown stone house was inhabited, great curiosity was shown by the old and the young. The grocer made bold to ask Mrs. McCoy how she gained a footing there, and she being always somewhat garrulous, told him the whole story. After that Miss Janet Page, her wealth, her eccentricities, her relations to the McCoys—in short, everything concerning her was a favorite topic of conversation in that locality. Little Don, who had a child's curiosity and love of telling remarkable things, added much to the fund of gossip, for every time

Kaiser and he went to the Forty-second Street house, he saw or heard something which greatly interested him. One time Dolly was cleaning silver, of which Miss Janet had great quantities stored away, and Don reported the dining-room table loaded down with it. He also added that there were elegant gold dishes and wonderful gold lamps, as well as silver articles; for some old fashioned brass candlesticks and snuffers with trays, were being polished. All this Mrs. McCoy chattered about to a new acquaintance or two, and trouble came of it.

Harry McCoy had reached an age when with a temperament like his to be idle was to be in mischief. He might have made an excellent machinist if he had been trained to work, but he had grown up utterly undisciplined. He read only police records, sporting papers, or dime novels of the wildest sort, and he had no companions who were not worse than he himself. It is not likely

he would have planned in detail any scheme of villainy at this stage of his life, but older and bolder rascals found it possible to use him. He loitered about home all summer, sleeping in the house often, eating there when he could add anything to the larder. He was never ugly, and to Don he was always good-natured. As time went by the little boy found that Harry was interested in learning all about Dolly and Baldwin, about the house they lived in, its rooms and its furniture. He even asked Don to question Dolly about several matters, but he was strict in forbidding Don to ever lisp a word about his brother. Once or twice he accompanied the child and the dog as far as the house, and studied its exterior very carefully. Not long after this a small, dark foreigner, known by sight to Don as a frequenter of a near bar-room, called to him as he was going home one night, and sent a message by him to Harry. He gave

the child some pennies, called him a "keen little one," and asked how Kaiser came to look so fat? When he learned where Kaiser boarded, he asked other questions, and it did not occur to the boy that the man knew several facts that he had not told him, and of which, in the nature of things, he ought to be ignorant. Several times after this day Don saw this same man, and he came to consider him a friend of Harry's.

It was Don's usual custom when his flowers were sold late in the afternoon, to go first to Dolly before going home, but one day, about the first of August, Harry with two men, one of them the foreigner, passed his little stand in Fourteenth Street. They stopped near him in earnest debate.

"I tell you," said Harry, talking as low as he could speak and be heard, "I tell you, that one is as green as a leek; I can manage easy. Couldn't I know if —— scented any

such thing in the air? —— can be shut up afterwards, but not before, if he guessed."

The men grumbled together a while, then one took a car, and the other followed Harry close to Don.

"Shut up shop now, and I'll take you off on a lark," said the older brother.

"Where?" asked Don, as Kaiser began sniffing around the stranger's boots.

"Oh, I'm going to Hoboken, to see a shooting match."

Don's best flowers were sold; he bestowed a few fresh leaves and one rose on a woman near by, who sold fans, then he followed Harry, Kaiser going as a matter of course. The sail on the river was beautiful, and boy-like, Don enjoyed the shooting match in spite of much profanity, drunkenness and fighting. These last were only too familiar to him, for he had passed much of his short life in the streets. About dark Harry took him to a dingy underground saloon, and they had what

seemed to him an excellent supper, he being very hungry and not fastidious. At supper the friend joined them, and held a long, low talk with Harry.

"Come, hurry up, youngster," he said suddenly turning about to give Don a survey. "I live in Albany, and I must start for there in an hour."

Don swallowed his last morsel hastily, wondering meanwhile what his hurrying had to do with this man's movements. It might be that he lived in Albany, but he had certainly been in New York all summer. As Don glanced at him he happened to be standing where the strong gas-light fell on his hair, which, to Don's surprise, looked red, instead of jet black as formerly.

"I am ready to go," said Harry, and the three went together to the ferry. The man, whom Harry called "Van," crossed over on the boat with them, but after a whispered consultation he left Don's brother, who turn-

ed then to the little boy, saying, "I have got an errand up town, and you may go with me."

Don followed him into a car, thinking it rather fine to be riding about in this fashion. When Harry had gone as far as a certain point, they got out and walked awhile, until, to Don's surprise, they found themselves in Forty-second Street. Here, only a few steps from Miss Page's house, Harry entered a saloon, leaving Don to wait outside. The little boy amused himself by peeping through a crack in a window shade, for this was rather a stylish resort, kept very quiet and secluded.

When Harry came out, Don exclaimed: "Why, wasn't that man in there?"

"Nonsense, you little fool! Didn't you just leave him two miles down town?" asked Harry, sharply.

"Yes—but a man's back in there looked like his."

"I reckon he has taken his back along with him, where he has gone. Now Don,

as long as you are right here, you better go in and tell Dolly, as you call her, why you did not come this afternoon with Kaiser. The dog is hungry now, and maybe she'll give him a bone; it isn't nine o'clock yet. She does not shut up until ten, you say."

"No, I said that she went up-stairs for the night at half-past nine; I heard her say so."

"Yes—well, I hope you have learned to shut the door behind you when you come out every day, and don't make her leave her kitchen work to follow you."

"Of course," said Don, "the door locks itself when shut."

"It is a long hall that leads to the kitchen, isn't it, and the first door to the left you say goes into the old dining-room?"

"No, the door to the left is just into a little closet, where she keeps baskets and tools and her rag-bag."

"Well, I don't buy her rags, so I don't care," said Harry, carelessly.

They were at the area gate by this time, and Don went in and rang the bell, while Harry strolled along, saying: "I'll wait for you on the corner."

Dolly answered the bell, and expressed decided disapproval at seeing her visitor at that late hour. Nevertheless she let Don in, for Kaiser had plunged ahead toward the kitchen. Miss Page never allowed the gas to be lighted in the lower hall on ordinary occasions; she was sure that Dolly could see well enough from the light in the kitchen, so almost in darkness, Don stumbled after her, making excuses for his arrival as best he could. Dolly fed the dog hurriedly, gave Don something to eat, and went on mixing bread, an operation in which he had interrupted her.

"Run along home, now," she remarked, when the boy and dog ceased eating. "Shut the door fast behind you, and never again come so late."

Don arose very meekly, whistled to Kaiser, said "good night," and pattered through the long, dark hall. As he slipped back the spring, and opened the outer door, he came near falling, for either Kaiser ran between his legs, or some one pushed him. Indeed in his bewilderment he was sure just for an instant that somebody darted past him; but Harry's voice sounded in his ear, as laughing low, he said: "What are you pitching about so for? Did Kaiser trip you up?"

"Why! How! Did you pop in and out again?"

What are you talking about! Shut the door!" And shutting it for him, with a loud snap, Harry, started briskly down the street.

"How funny! Why it did seem for certain Harry, that you jumped right past me in the door."

"It was Kaiser," returned Harry, coolly.

The little boy concluded that his brother was right, and they walked on in silence; but

at the next block Harry said: "Trot along home now, I had forgotten I wanted to see a fellow in a stable near here."

Don said, "All right," and reaching Third Avenue, he turned down the brightly lighted thoroughfare, with Kaiser at his heels. A moment after Harry called him back to ask: "Did you tell Dolly where you had been with me—or that I was waiting for you?"

"No."

"Very well. Now see here, Don, don't you tell anybody, even Jessie, a word of where I took you, or tell that you saw me anywhere to-day. Will you remember? If you tell, you will make trouble, and get put out of that house you live in!"

Nothing could have seemed more dreadful to Don than the prospect of leaving the old house which he found so delightful. To leave it would, perhaps, be to lose sight of Miss Louise, to have to give up Kaiser and all the new interests of his life. He was a credu-

lous, guileless child, and so promised secrecy. Wondering why it was enjoined on him, he yet suspected no wrong.

Indeed, Miss Page would have been surprised and perhaps pleased to have known how much Don liked her old house. The part inhabited seemed cheerful, even very fine to him, and he wandered about the dim, silent halls and the cool, empty rooms, fascinated by their half light. Behind the house was a little yard shut in by high brick walls. Long ago vines had been trained on these walls and still grew there luxuriantly. The grass kept crisp and green in the perpetual shade; and overlooking this yard was a piazza, half inclosed with green lattice work. Here, every Sunday afternoon, might have been found a busy little school, very informal, but in Don's opinion, very interesting. When Miss Louise found that her summer was to be spent in the city, and that an excellent teacher had taken her place in the

mission-school where she had been working, she took Don as her assistant in starting a work in the neighborhood of Miss Janet's old house. He collected between twenty and thirty boys and girls, who came together every Sunday to sing, to hear Louise talk or read, and to learn Bible verses from gay cards. Miss Janet may have had an idea of this enterprise, but she showed no interest in it at the time.

But to return to Don and his brother. The little boy hastening home that night, found the family going to bed, and no one asked him from whence he came or where he had been. Harry McCoy, when Don left him, wheeled about and retraced his steps. He lingered a half hour in a saloon, but a little after ten he passed Miss Page's house again, going on until he came to the park behind the Reservoir. Here seated on a bench in the warm darkness, he waited — for what? He was going that night to become

the tool of two of the keenest rogues outside the Penitentiary. He had slipped easily into their hands after a chance acquaintance, and had lent himself to them without thought. They knew what they risked; they would stop at no crime if it were a question of escape or capture. He was a wild, bad boy, but it was as a boy he was thinking and acting.

"Van," was a smooth talking villain, a Nihilist, had he known enough to adopt the name. He had made it clear to Harry that the rich had no more right to the wealth they enjoyed than had the poor who were deprived of this wealth. Here was this "half crazy old maid," who did not even herself enjoy the money she hoarded. The silver that she let rust in her house might much better be melted and put into circulation. If she were relieved of as much of her superfluous possessions as a burglar or two could carry away, she would be none the worse off. So Van

had talked and Harry had listened. There had been something rather exciting in getting from little Don the whole "lay of the land," and in seeing Van so quick to put one thing with another. Still it was rather startling when one day he reported that Baldwin had gone to Connecticut for three days—rather startling to find Van's plan ready for immediate execution. This night, as he sat here alone, he reflected, with something not unlike surprise, at his own act; that he had let Van into Miss Janet's house, where he was this moment concealed with such tools and probably such weapons as he saw fit to carry. At twelve o'clock precisely, he would let in Harry himself at the basement door. The third accomplice was to watch outside the house with a horse and conveyance, accessible when needed. Nothing "neater," could be imagined, or so Harry said to himself. What was he doing it for? Not so much for gain, as for lawlessness and love of

adventure. He did not propose to follow the career of a burglar. No, there had come to him a strange impulse; with his share of this night's exploit, he planned to leave America. It seemed to him he could well and pleasantly remember Scotland, and he half fancied that if he were to return there he could start anew, and make something of himself.

Meanwhile, time passed, and the more respectable loiterers in the Park slipped away. The streets were quieter. The cars that passed were full of passengers, as they would be for hours yet, but about the Park there was so little going and coming that the policeman would soon order him to move on. Knowing this, he arose, shook himself and sauntered away.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE NIGHT'S WORK.

MISS PAGE, since spraining her ankle, had slept on the first floor above the basement. Miss Louise's room was in the next story, and the other members of the family were still higher. Now before midnight, on the night of the proposed burglary, each person in the house had retired and was soundly sleeping. Miss Janet heard no one stepping lightly about in the region below her, no one creeping up the stairs

Sideboards and closets were easily ransacked. Intense was the disgust of Van to find not the "worth of a silver thimble," as he muttered, with an oath. But there must be valuables in the house somewhere between

coal hole and attic, and these the robbers were bound to find. Success began to reward them at last. In a large room on the second floor was an old solid silver tea service, and there were also quantities of spoons, forks, ladles and a pitcher a hundred years old, the pride of Miss Page's heart, although it had not been used for a quarter of a century. All these were noiselessly removed; then trunks were overhauled and their contents scattered right and left, but very little taken. The once costly furs, the rich silks and satins kept so carefully were not sufficiently marketable now to make it wise to steal them.

"Wherever the old woman generally sleeps she probably keeps her diamonds," whispered Van; "she has plenty, I'll warrant! Such scarecrows always have," and profanely commenting on this house with no room furnished enough to give a clew even to a robber as to its use, Van slipped up to Louise's door

and tried it. For the first time she had neglected to lock it, and he entered the little room like a shadow. He turned his light first here, then there, hearing the sleeper's regular breathing, as he found no diamonds or jewels on her dressing-table—no diamonds even in her ears or on her hand, resting softly on the coverlet. Only a plain gold ring there, not worth any risk. With her purse, containing a few dollars, he passed out again, leaving her one treasure, her mother's watch, safe under the young girl's pillow. All the skillful part of this enterprise Van had taken on himself. He could not trust Harry; he wanted nothing of him but to watch, to help as directed—to be caught if any one must be caught. It was Van therefore who crept into Miss Page's room and searched it in vain for money or diamonds—Van who stood over her the instant she stirred and opened her eyes. She comprehended almost in that second what it all meant, when the sickening

odor of chloroform came near enough to her nostrils to oppress her, when she saw a masked man bending low, felt a strong hand on her throat, and heard the low voice that ordered her to tell "quick," where she kept her money and her valuables. She dared not scream, with those tight-clasped fingers at her throat. She gasped out the assurance that she kept no money in the house—then the cloth saturated with chloroform half stifled her.

Harry McCoy, left in the basement, would not remain there. He said to himself that Van meant to secure all the spoils, and to claim later some most unequal share of them. He too crept along up-stairs in the faint light of the one gas-burner left lit in the main hall. He passed Miss Page's room and the next, stealing softly up to the floor where Baldwin slept. Don had been right in telling him of Baldwin's trip to Connecticut, but he had neglected to report his unexpected return, if he

knew of that fact. The first flights of stairs were carpeted, and Harry's steps were noiseless. This last staircase was uncovered, and even his shoeless feet made the boards give out creaks. In terror, Harry stood motionless until he heard Dolly snoring, as only a fat, sound-lunged, tired cook can snore. Surely there could be no danger here, for only Dolly slept on this floor, now Baldwin was absent. In any other house no robber would have expected to find treasures so high, but it would be like Miss Page to hide them here, where Baldwin could keep guard. While Harry heard Dolly snore through her closed door, Baldwin, who had left his door open, it being a warm night—Baldwin awoke, hearing something, he could not tell what. Was there a stealthy step outside his door? Did the boards creak in that mysterious way they have at night? Baldwin hated mysteries. He leaped to his feet, darted out into the hall, and dashed into a man's arms! It was too

late for a light, too late to think that the intruder might be armed—they grappled one another, scarcely knowing why. To escape, Harry must free himself from Baldwin, and the latter was neither feeble nor cowardly. It seemed only a moment—less than a moment, for Dolly's snores did not cease even while the two struggled fiercely together. They were near the head of the stairs, their bodies coming constantly with full force against the stair railing. Suddenly the younger wrestler gave one tremendous jerk away from his fellow—there was a loud crack of breaking woodwork, a scream! Baldwin tottered back — his antagonist was gone! He could hear a heavy body falling, dashing once against some opposing point—falling again—then a dull thud far below, as it rested somewhere!

As Baldwin ran down, and before he could reach the gas to turn it up in the hall, he saw a light dart from Miss Page's room;

it seemed to go in a flash down and out. Loud groans guided him to the spot where, in the hall, now full of light, he found, like a crushed worm, the body of a young man. His groans were becoming moans, and Baldwin believed him to be dying. Louise and Dolly, aroused by the breaking of the baluster, came in a moment, hurrying down, and for the next ten minutes there was intense excitement. Dolly called the police, and Louise found Miss Page not quite unconscious, yet stupid from the effect of the chloroform. It was soon evident that the house had been ransacked, and that the burglars, if there were several, had made their escape, securing their booty and leaving their unfortunate companion behind.

What had been stolen was not at once to be known, and little or no thought was given to the matter, even by Miss Janet, when she was able to realize the meaning of the excitement. The young man had been stretched

out on the hall carpet. Baldwin with the policeman had tried to lift him, but his groans were so agonizing, they desisted, until Dolly had called in a young doctor living next door; and before he came Miss Page exclaimed: "If he groans again like that, he shall not be stirred from this house, for burglar or not, he is human."

Louise, who tried to keep her nerves in subjection, had not yet been able to look at the poor fellow, but hearing Baldwin say that he was unconscious, she drew near as the moaning ceased. The moment she saw the masses of dark hair, and the handsome regular features, she exclaimed: "Why Baldwin! Don't you know who it is? Is it not that McCoy boy? He is nothing but a boy."

"I never saw the fellow—but you don't say this is a McCoy?" he cried, in surprise and horror.

She was sure; yet before she could reply, the doctor, another policeman and a neigh-

bor came. The women shivering with excitement, drew back into the next room, and waited to know if the young man was fatally hurt. Baldwin came to them after awhile, saying that he would probably die, but the doctor could not yet tell the extent of his internal injuries. Both his legs were broken and his back badly hurt. The policeman now proposed to move him to the hospital, but he would undoubtedly die on the way.

"He shall not be stirred from this house," cried Miss Page. "Bring down a soft mattress and have him moved into this front parlor, if he can be moved at all. If that young doctor knows enough to see to him, it is all right; but the police had better send some one else."

Miss Page had a defiant tone, as if she feared the law would snatch the offender away from her; but none objected to her plan. The oldest policeman grimly said: "If he escapes, it will be into the next world."

That was a strange night. If the robbery itself and the flight of the other burglars occupied any one's attention, it was the affair of the police and was not first in the minds of the family. When all that could be done for the injured man was done, and he had been carried unconscious into the parlor, Baldwin reported to Louise that she was right; from a paper in his pocket they knew that he was Harry McCoy.

Contrary to the doctor's expectation he lived through the night, and after daylight he opened his eyes, staring long at Baldwin, who leaned over him to catch anything he might say. Gradually a look of intelligence came into his dull eyes, and he muttered: "Fell, didn't I?"

Baldwin nodded assent.

"A bad job; if I am going to die—send for Jessie McCoy—you know—she's my sister."

"Yes, I'll get her here soon."

"Don had nothing to do with this or none of 'em—do you understand that?—nobody in the family knew—" And gasping from the effort, Harry fainted.

A little later word was sent to the old house, and soon Jessie appeared at the basement door with Don. Her face was colorless, and she could scarcely speak. Dolly drew her almost by force into the kitchen, and putting a cup of hot coffee to her lips made her drink it; then the good woman went to call "Miss Louise," saying: "Do you come and tell her about it. It seems the police went right to the old house, searched it, and asked all sorts of questions last night, but told them nothing clearly. She knew Harry was hurt, but not how or where. You talk to her, if you know how."

Louise, if she did not talk much when she came, knew how to be very kind and pitiful. While Dolly gave Don a tempting breakfast, she led Jessie up-stairs, and at her request

went with her to Harry's side. The poor sister took his hand, big and rough, but now so limp; she held it with the tears chasing down her cheeks, but she could not speak.

"I'm sorry for you, Jess," he muttered. "The McCoys were all honest before me, but I'm going under, and I guess they won't throw it in your face. It was the first time."

Jessie could only sob and quiver like a leaf in the wind. Suddenly Miss Janet limped across the room, and stood by them, saying:

"Jessie, your brother was breaking into my house, but the Lord has taken his punishment out of everybody's else hands. I am sorry for him, and for you, from the bottom of my heart. What he has done, or been, shall never be visited on you. You must stay here with him as long as he lives."

"How long am I going to live?" gasped the young fellow, turning his great eyes slowly toward Miss Janet. Just then Baldwin

came with something in a cup, and carefully lifting his head, gave him the contents.

"Why didn't you kick me into the street to die, or tumble me out to the police?" he asked, with actual curiosity in his feeble voice.

"Because you were in agony of body," said Louise, coming nearer, "and because in your poor, crushed body you have a soul."—She hesitated a moment before she went on. "You ask how long you will live; we don't know, perhaps only a little while; but won't you take this time to think of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for sinners? Remember that on that cross he forgave a dying thief—that is just what you are—because that thief looked to Him, and begged His mercy. You can pray, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.' If you do it honestly, He is able and willing to save your soul."

Every word Louise spoke had been slowly, clearly uttered, and Harry listened. They

thought he did not comprehend, however, for a strange look crossed his face, and rested there, until turning his eyes toward Jessie he said: "I sat by our mother once in the old kirk in Scotland. I was younger than Don, but I remember the man read that about the thief."

"You better let him rest now," said Baldwin, and so they went away; but Jessie was very grateful to hear Miss Page say, that she need not leave the house while Harry lived.

He did not die that day, but part of the time he was in a stupor, and when aroused out of it, his mind wandered. He was not able to answer, or to understand many questions put to him by the officers of the law, but from the story told by Don, the police were put at once on the track of Van; they failed, however, to find him, then, or ever after, in any of his accustomed haunts.

As Miss Janet sat with the two girls later

in the day, she forgot Jessie's presence, and exclaimed: "He is not of age yet—what a pity — a strong, splendidly developed body; he does not look dull either. Under some circumstances he might have made a man worth something. I suppose the city is full of boys just like him."

"He was not so bad as you think," broke in Jessie, sobbing anew. "He did not have much to help him, and everybody was willing to teach him something wicked. He told me Sunday, that he did not know but one person in the world who ever talked to him about making a good man of himself, or urged him to go to some honest work. He was always kind to me and to little Don. I can remember those times he talked of — away back in Scotland; mother used to say he would be everything good, and a comfort to her when she was old — if she had only lived."

Miss Page grew sharp in self-defence,

sometimes. Jessie's lament made her uncomfortable, and she said, almost coldly: "After all, there is every help nowadays to a boy who wants to make a man of himself; free schools, free churches, reading-rooms, and good people always ready to lend a hand."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Jessie sadly, "only the good people lend the hand sometimes when it is too late."

She meant no reproach, but Miss Janet received a new idea, as the girl went on: "You see we children of poor people can't always be fed and clothed to go to schools: and boys like Harry, if they haven't much education, find cheap theatres livelier than reading-rooms, and so they don't see the use of growing up honest and industrious until the time to become so has slipped away from them. I don't suppose any one is to blame."

"No, of course not; we all stand or fall by ourselves in this world," returned Miss Page,

sternly. She was leaning back in her chair, when glancing up, her eyes caught the sunlight streaming, as often at this hour, over the Good Samaritan. Lately, whenever she looked at this picture, she did not see the prominent figures. The indifferent Levite disappearing in the distance, always claimed her attention, and invariably she heard Don's artless comment: "I would not like to have been the ones who did not care, would you? But a great many people don't care!"

It occurred to Miss Page that the words she had just uttered were in the mind not of the Samaritan, whom Christians call "good," but without a doubt it was the Levite, who argued, "We all stand or fall by ourselves in this world."

They were sitting in silence when Baldwin came in to say that Harry seemed brighter than at any other time before, and was suffering less.

"You go in and sit by him," he said to

Jessie, "but don't let him talk. He wants to see a man whom he has heard talk in a Mission down town. He has told me enough about him, so I guess I can find him. I'm going to try, anyway. He knows he must die, and he knows he is not ready; he has faith, for some reason, in this man's words, and in his help."

"I know whom he means," said Jessie, before she went to her brother. "He is a young man, and if he is a minister, he seems different from others; he knows all about the city, and how to make men and boys listen to him."

When Baldwin and Jessie had left the room, Miss Page turned suddenly to Louise, and asked: "Where do you go Sunday afternoons?"

Louise replied that she taught in the B— Street Sunday-school two-thirds of the year.

"But now, this summer," persisted Miss Page, and she continued to question Louise

until she learned about her school on the piazza of the old house.

It was nearly dark when Baldwin returned with a gentleman, whom he led directly to Harry's side. Louise had gone to her room, but Miss Page, through the open door, could hear, even across the hall, much of the conversation which followed. In the fewest, clearest words that he could use, the new comer tried to hold up before Harry, Jesus Christ as the Saviour of all men. He drew from the boy the confession that he was a sinner, that he was afraid to meet his God, and that he would gladly lay hold on any hope, or faith, that could be made intelligible to him. When he began to talk with Harry, Miss Page had thought to herself: "It is too late; after a wasted life, what will be accomplished by a death-bed repentance;" but, as she listened, she found herself believing that repentance is repentance, whether it comes early or late.

When by-and-by she heard the poor prodigal's earnest tones, as he prayed aloud:

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner, for Christ's sake pardon all my past—" her eyes filled with tears, and she whispered, "Amen."

A little later Baldwin crossed the hall, and coming to Miss Page, whispered:

"Do you wish to speak to him before he goes? He is a minister, a splendid fellow, I think—his name is Flemming."

"Yes, when he comes out I will speak to him in the hall. I suppose it is only civil to do it," returned Miss Page, rising.

A moment after, Mr. Flemming bade Harry a quiet and a very solemn farewell; then he stopped for a conversation with Miss Page on the boy's family and all the circumstances of the case. They were standing at the foot of the stairs talking when Louise Norton came down. Lack of sleep and subsequent excitement had brought a flush to

her cheeks, her soft brown hair was a little rumpled, and seeing a stranger, she would have retreated, but Miss Page exclaimed:

"Louise, you know all about the family, and can tell—Miss Norton—Mr. Flemming, the minister who has been a good friend to the poor fellow."

What there was in this introduction to send every particle of color out of Louise's face and make the brief after interview so very incoherent, Miss Page was at a loss to understand. In a moment or two, however, the gentleman had gone, and Louise, hastily turning, had fled back to her own room, leaving Miss Janet more puzzled, wearied and interested in lives outside of herself than she had been for days—yes, for years.

Well, by-and-by the night came. The night that settled dark over the great city full of meeting human life! The night of death, that ended the brief and unprofitable life of Harry McCoy. Up to his last breath

he was conscious, and before it his prayers were constant and apparently heartfelt. He begged his stepmother, who was present, to make Don grow up a good man, and he died holding poor Jessie's hand.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUNDAY TO BE REMEMBERED.

THE weeks of the summer had gone rapidly by. Miss Page's ankle was now as strong as ever, and the time drew near when Louise must leave her to return to her school duties. She expressed no regret at this prospect of losing her guest, and Louise often wondered if her visit had been of any pleasure or profit to Miss Page. True, she had made some changes in the house; it looked more like a home, and less like a store-house; but after all Louise had most satisfaction in something connected with the old house. There her Sunday afternoon work had enlarged greatly. The children now half filled the back parlor, and little by

little their mothers had fallen into the habit of coming. It was so easy for a mother to pick up her baby, throw a shawl over her old dress and run in to listen to the singing, which Louise took care should be attractive. Then there was no formality about the exercises; if she read she also talked, asked questions, related anecdotes, and adapted all her teaching to the dull hearers. She had at first only intended to continue these exercises through the summer; but when they became so interesting, and the women and children began to talk of 'our' meetings, she hesitated to end all with the end of her own vacation. One Sunday afternoon, just before leaving Miss Page, she said:

"If there could be found some city missionary, or other worker, to carry on and enlarge the work, would you let it go on all winter, in your house?"

"As soon as cold weather comes those rooms will be as uncomfortable as a barn."

"I suppose so, but there might be some way of warming them."

"I don't intend to establish a church anywhere; there are plenty of free chapels in that part of the town." Miss Page's words were colder than her tone, and soon she added: "No doubt some pious busy bodies would go on with the thing if you gave it over to a society."

"I would rather have a person than a society at work there."

"By the way, Louise, there is that Mr. Flemming; perhaps he would be interested. You had met him before, had you not?"

"Yes—but he had a church of his own, when I knew him," replied Louise, hastily rising to prepare for her walk.

She went to her room, and was much surprised on coming down-stairs to find her cousin standing at the door, having on her bonnet and shawl.

"Sunday is such a long, wearisome day to

me, I am going with you," was her only remark.

It was a beautiful day in September, and the streets were full of elegantly dressed people; at least this was true of one part of the city, but when they turned towards their destination the scene changed. The occupants of the swarming tenement houses jostled them at every step, the gutters were full of children, and many were the drunken men slipping out of the closed (?) bar-rooms. Getting near her old home, Miss Page noticed that women and children greeted her companion smilingly, and many prepared to follow them.

"I have a circle of warm friends about here," said Louise, "and some of them I fear are very disreputable; by no means could they be said to belong to the 'good society,' of New York."

"And to think," said Miss Page, turning her sharp eyes toward a pawnbroker's win-

dow—"only to think of the grand parties that have been held in that very house across there when the Van Renssaeller's lived there in my day."

The plaintive tone in which Miss Page spoke the last words, made Louise look down on her in sudden pity. Did the little spinster feel that all her life was far behind her, all its good, its freshness gone? Involuntarily she spoke out her own thought:

"If changes come to some things does it not make you glad, to think that the things God always gives us and those he has most to do with, are always the same?"

"What things?"

"Beautiful things—this blue sky to-day, for instance, is as exquisite as the sky a thousand years ago; flowers, Springs—everything in nature; but best of all it is true of spiritual things, for as the Bible says over and over: 'His mercy endureth for ever.'"

When they entered the house, they found

a little audience already assembled. All sorts of contrivances for seats had been brought together in the old parlor, and in the most comfortable sat the mothers. The children nestled anywhere in corners. Miss Page's arrival made no sensation. Only the McCoy's knew her by sight. The others glanced at her dull old shawl, and the fact that it was of camel's hair escaped them. They judged by the rest of her attire that she was some "shabby genteel," seamstress perhaps—certainly no relation to their bright and lovely Miss Norton. Little Don hastened to find her a chair. Kaiser came and stood by her side, as if to show her due attention, then they began, old and young, to sing:

"Saviour, like a shepherd lead us,
Much we need thy tender care."

After singing a hymn, Louise would talk of it, connect it with some Bible truth, perhaps tell a simple story from real life, and

then they would sing again. The leading thought this day, was the Good Shepherd. Some of them heard for the first time the parable of the Lost Sheep, some for the first time pondered on the truth that there was one who loved them. Near Miss Page sat a pale woman, whose face was more thoughtful than her neighbors. She glanced at Miss Page's gray hair once, than back at Louise's sweet face, remarking:

"It is a new comforting way of looking at it, Miss ——, this thinking the Lord loves us, and cares what road we go, 'specially if it's a rough one. I was brought up religious, but I married when very young a man that didn't like good things; I've lost six children; every one died just as it got to be a comfort to me. Most always it's been hard livin'! Sometimes I could think I loved religion—then again I'd be so tired I'd think, what is the use? But it would always be easy like, Miss,

to love our Saviour, if we'd sense it that He loved us all the time."

The tears stood in Louise's eyes as she replied:

"Yes; that is a blessed thing to remember; now let us sing the 'Ninety and Nine.'"

While she was teaching it to them, she saw Miss Page go quietly out, and she remained away until the meeting ended.

A spirit of restlessness possessed Miss Janet this day. She felt like a person in a dream. While she had made one in the little audience, what varied thoughts filled her mind! One moment she was studying the haggard face of some woman in rags and tatters, trying to fancy what life meant to her. The next she was reflecting that just in that corner where the red-headed boy was now furtively teasing his little hunchbacked sister —on that spot she had stood one morning, years ago, trying on before a long mirror a robe of white satin seeded with pearls. It

was to have been her bridal robe—and it was this very moment in this very house. She began to wonder how it would look to her, after all these years. Moth-eaten and mildewed, of course — what was this they were singing so sweetly in her ears?

"O! that beautiful city,
With its mansions of light,
With its glorified beings
In pure garments of white,
Where no evil thing cometh
To despoil what is fair,
Where the angels are watching,
Is —my name written there?"

A little while after this it was that Miss Janet slipped out of the old parlor and crept up the stairway, past all the other doors, until she came to one she had not entered in twenty-seven years. Yet she had the key with her, she always carried it. Her face grew paler, her hand trembled, but turning the key in the lock, she pushed back the creaking door and entered, shutting it quickly behind her.

In the pale afternoon light she stood motionless until she had seen all, the gray dust on the faded silk chairs, the stained window hangings, the carpet out of which all rich colors had gone where the sunshine of uncounted days had fallen through shutters always aslant at the same angle. O, it was a strange, dreary room! She stole across it like a spirit and gazed in the blurred mirror. It reflected pinched features, white locks, and eyes sharp and unquiet—but in that same mirror this same face had beamed rosy, beautiful and young one June day. It was long past June now.

There was a large closet near by, and when she opened it a rat ran out. She wondered if he fed on dust, for there seemed only that and mould covering every article she touched. She lifted the lid of a trunk and looked in—it was empty, save for a handful of old lace, a few old trinkets and artificial flowers. What moth and mould had not corrupted, thieves

had stolen. Even the old bridal robe had failed her. With a bitter laugh that echoed strangely in the weird place, Miss Page dropped the trunk lid and shut the closet door. She seated herself in what once had been an elegant easy chair, and closing her eyes fell into a long, long meditation. By-and-by she heard them singing below her, away in the distance:

"Are you coming Home to Jesus,
Out of darkness into light?
Are you coming Home to-night,
To your loving, heavenly Father,
Are you coming Home to-night?"

Then she heard the singers go through the hall, and out, heard the voices of the little children in the street below, and later the house was still. Louise had gone away without her, supposing she was not here any longer. The tears began to chase down Miss Page's thin cheeks, and fall on her clasped hands; by-and-by she slipped down on her knees, and prayed as she had not

prayed, since the day she went out of this room, a fair young girl, with a bitter, angry heart, a heart filled with aversion to her fellow-creatures, and lacking faith in her God. In the calm of this Sabbath afternoon, all the bitterness went out forever. She prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Her prayer was heard.

CHAPTER X.

LOUISE'S NEW HOME.

FOR the next few days after her visit to the old house, Miss Janet was very quiet, and, for her, exceedingly gentle. Once or twice, when Louise spoke of leaving her in a short time, she opened her lips to speak, but closed them again with a peculiar smile. One morning, as they sat at the breakfast table, Miss Page leaned back in her chair, studying first Louise's pleasant face, and then the table before her. During Louise's visit, a few more spoons and dishes had been added, but the service could not yet be called tasteful or abundant.

"Baldwin says the police cannot find that Van, and I shall probably never see the

stolen silver. No doubt it is all melted. It was of no use to me—and there is plenty left."

Louise looked up in surprise at this avowal, and was not less astonished to hear Miss Page continue: "I am going to turn over a new leaf—I want you to help me with your advice to-day, and to-night I will tell you why I have decided to change my way of living. Whatever I buy new hereafter, I intend to have simple, and not expensive. I have new uses for my wealth."

In all Louise's acquaintance with Miss Page, she had never known her to speak of her "wealth," before.

"But this house is already full of hoarded things, spoiling for lack of use. We will begin to-day to alter all this. At noon we will have fine linen, handsome china and cut glass, with all the silver Dolly wants to care for. You have made the library a beautiful room; now you may direct Baldwin to hire

sufficient help, and have every article of furniture put where it belongs. We will begin to have a home again."

Louise's eyes grew dim; it touched her to hear the lonely woman say, "we," in this house, where she would have only her servants, but she answered quickly: "Oh, I will be delighted to help you in this."

"Well, let us go about it at once, then," returned Miss Page, briskly.

"I declare, Cousin Janet, it is as much fun as reading a fairy story," laughed Louise, somewhat later, for Baldwin and Dolly had entered into the affair with all their hearts. All over the house, men were laying carpets, hanging pictures, women were cleaning glass and scrubbing paint. Louise laughed quietly to herself, at Dolly's confidential remark: "We better get it all done while the fit is on her, or to-morrow we may not be able to carry it forward."

Miss Page herself had opened trunks,

bureau drawers and long locked closets. In one great pile she had placed dresses, shawls, laces and jewels, remarking: "Louise, those things are all of the best quality, and as beautiful now as ever. The dresses were made very full, and can be altered to look modern—you are welcome to them all."

Without heeding the young girl's reply she went on heaping up articles to the right and left, saying: "I shall never buy any more new clothes, I have enough to last a life-time; but hereafter, I will wear better things. You may tell me how and what to do, for young people know about such things. Now over and above all we can use, and plenty of good sensible clothing which I shall give to Dolly, there is enough to clothe many a poor person. We will select all the strong, warm articles that the moths have not spoiled and put them together for a supply to draw on for charity."

So it went all that day. Louise enjoyed all

with increasing wonder. Miss Janet grew excited as she worked; the color came into her cheeks, and she talked freely of the past in a much less melancholy strain than ordinarily. Old cabinets were re-opened, and beautiful curiosities brought out; rare vases, costly books, exquisite little pictures came again to the light. More than once Louise exclaimed: "Why this house has been a perfect storehouse!"

"Yes—nothing but a storehouse," remarked Miss Page, at last; "but now, if what I have can give any one any pleasure, I mean to have it used."

"I am so glad of this, Cousin Janet."

Miss Page turned around from a drawer she had just emptied, exclaiming: "Well, child, if it will make you any more glad, I can tell you that you yourself have much to do with my new resolutions."

"I?"

"Yes, you. This summer you have made

me ashamed of myself. I meant to have a good, long talk with you to-night, but perhaps I will be too tired. I will rest awhile now, and begin." So saying, Miss Janet took an easier position, and in a tone so new, because void of all sharpness—so earnest that every word impressed her listener, she continued:

"You know me as a stingy, cross old maid; that is my reputation, and I deserve it. Many people add to this that I am crazy. I don't wonder at that, either; but you will understand me better if I tell you briefly a little of my earlier life. At twenty years of age, I was a beauty. (If you doubt this, and no one would think it possible, I will show you a picture I have.) I was a passionate, self-willed creature, petted by brothers and sisters, humored by wealthy parents. My word was law, my life one round of gayety and pleasure. I firmly believed that I had a right to expect and to demand happiness at

the hands of my Maker, and I conceived happiness to be always the perfect gratification of my own will. You, who only see the old house across town in its decay, cannot picture it, as it used to seem to me then; a sort of earthly Paradise. My first grief experienced there was keen, but there was no bitterness in it. My mother died, and not long after, a brother went; then a sister, but there were left still a brother, a sister and my father. We drew closer together, and loved one another more intensely, if possible. While our hearts were very tender, and the home life very quiet, lacking the usual excitement of social activities, my brother brought a new acquaintance into our circle. I won't dwell long on this, Louise, but I presume you can understand how soon I came to think there was not his equal on earth. I think this still."

As Louise glanced up, betraying her surprise, Miss Janet added, "his equal for in-

famy—but he is dead, and God is his Judge. Then, with perfect faith in him, I was engaged, and in time I made most elaborate preparations for my marriage. The morning of what would have been our wedding-day letters came to me with the fullest proofs of his dishonor, and his villainy. The year that followed was one long, black dream—my father and brother died, one suddenly by a terrible accident, the other after a long, distressing illness. Sometimes I seemed to myself almost insane, sometimes I was as cold and dull as a stone. I lost all faith in human nature. I believed in God only as a Creator, far removed from us, caring nothing for the joy or the agony of one single creature, being only the passionless arbitrator of each one's fate. Months and years slipped away. My sister became an invalid; we shut ourselves away from the world, and soon the world let us alone. When this last member of our once happy family was taken from me, and

I left entirely alone, nothing seemed of any more consequence. I had no desire to spend money on myself, having no longer any wishes to gratify. I loved no human being, so why should I give it away? I never would have moved out of the old house had my lawyer not fairly worried me out of it. He declared that the neighborhood had become so bad, I would be murdered for my money. You know the rest."

Yes, Louise could easily fill in all the details of this picture, but what she did not yet clearly understand was the change that all at once had come over Miss Page. She ventured to ask, in the moment following her last words: "Yes, Cousin Janet, I can imagine it; and now you are coming out again into the sunshine, are you not?"

"I do not know about myself, and it does not matter so much, but I am going to try to turn a little sunshine on other people's lives after this. Will you help me, Louise?"

"How?"

"If I show you a feasible way, will you help me? Promise me that."

Louise hesitated a moment before she replied:

"Don't think me obstinate when I say I can't promise unconditionally to do anything, but I will be very glad to help if I think I can do it well."

"You are still afraid of me," smiled Miss Page, shrewdly; "you too fancy that I am a little crazy. Well, never mind. I have a proposal which you may think over to-day and can accept or refuse to-morrow. This is it: you earn your own living, Louise, by teaching, and you work hard; I will offer you the same salary, with the vacation time excluded or included, at the same rate of pay as your salary. You can, if you will, come into my house, then be in a sense independent of me, and may leave when you are dissatisfied.

You must help me in ways I will explain later."

Miss Page returned to her work in the bureau drawer, leaving Louise dumb with amazement. It was a full quarter of an hour before she asked, "In what ways could I help, Cousin Janet? Do tell me now."

"Well, first of all, right here at home. Begin as if you were my sister. Make this house like a home. I am too old to know how, too old to have bright ideas. Then there is that old house. I mean to have it cleaned and repaired. The parlors can be made into rooms for Mission services. There can be a room fitted up for boys. I have heard of places where they have books and games and entertaining lectures by people who wanted to keep such fellows as Harry McCoy from rum-holes. There could be a good employment office kept by honest, Christian people, who would help good girls into good situations. I don't know why a

sort of coffee-room attached would not be a nice idea, a place where hot coffee could be supplied so very cheaply that it would keep some away from saloons. The McCoys could have regular work and support in attending to whatever part of the establishment they could manage best, and other reliable persons could be hired—"

"My cousin Janet, are you really in earnest?" cried Louise. "Have you planned all this out, actually meaning to start such things?"

"Yes, if I live—even if I do not live out this week, it can go on, for I shall have it arranged at once so that some one else can carry on the enterprise. Of course if we (for I want your help in just these ways) if we undertake a charity of this sort we need at once the advice and aid of practical, experienced workers. We don't want to run headlong into any aimless, foolish efforts. I must have wise heads as well as warm hearts. My

tenement houses too must be looked into. I shall reduce my rents and improve the apartments. They need more water, better air, and a—missionary. I could send all three to them, and not impoverish myself."

"Cousin Janet, what has got into you?" cried Louise, impulsively.

"The Spirit of the Lord," replied Miss Page, reverently. "Last Sunday I realized that I was growing old fast, and that my money would soon be worthless to me—that what I had to do I must do quickly. Will you stay here and help me, Louise? Take until to-morrow to think of it!"

"I cannot take another moment to think of it; I will stay and be glad to stay," cried Louise, just as Dolly thrust her head in the half open door to say:

"Dinner is ready."

Perhaps it was as well for both Miss Janet and Louise to be just at this moment interrupted, for the elder lady was trembling with

excitement, and Louise's own feelings were getting overwrought. It was almost a relief to stop this strange conversation for a time and follow Dolly to the dining-room.

As they entered it and approached the table, Louise bit her lips with amusement, and Miss Page suddenly laughed out more heartily than she had been heard to laugh for years. To be sure her heart was strangely light, but the immediate cause of her laughter was Dolly's latest exploit. She had been told to discard the old table furniture and use that which had been hitherto stored away. She had availed herself of the permission to the largest extent. There was silver enough for a dinner party, salt-dishes and finger-bowls for a dozen people, and if the food was not in the same lavish proportion, it was varied and abundant enough to suit any reasonable cook.

"Louise, you must give her a few lessons," said Miss Page, seating herself behind an

enormous silver tea-pot. "If you do not, I shall be sorry that the burglars left as much behind them as this."

"Oh, I can manage Dolly," laughed Louise; "she has a great desire to be 'elegant,' as she calls it, but if I tell her 'display,' is vulgar, she will find the right medium."

All day busy workers were here and there about the house, up-stairs and down, and for a while all was confusion and hurry; but toward night order came out of chaos. When later Miss Page and Louise went from room to room, they seemed to themselves to be visitors in some charming new home.

"I would not suppose that merely tacking down carpets, and putting things where they belong, would make such a difference," said Miss Page, innocently; "everything was here before."

"Yes, but everything was in a heap, a roll, or a box," said Louise smiling; "for instance, these crimson silk curtains were in a closet

drawer, not at the windows; these Turkish rugs were in the attic, and that copy of Fra Angelico's lovely picture was packed in straw."

"Yes, it is all delightful; but I shall not really begin to enjoy it until I have put my tenement houses in decent order."

These words, so simply uttered, impressed Louise as nothing else that day had moved her. If Miss Janet thought to "enjoy" anything, she was changed indeed; and to what a degree must she be changed if she could not enjoy herself until she had cared for other people! They ended their circuit in the library, and Miss Page sank down in her arm-chair under her picture of the Good Samaritan, saying:

"I like this room the best of all, Louise. It reminds me of the old house—but in a pleasant sense. By-the-way, Louise, I have an idea to suggest. You know, as I said this morning, we must have advice from people of

experience in charitable and reformatory work before we go on with the plans at that house. Suppose we send for that Mr. Flemming some evening before long, and talk the matter over with him."

"Why do you choose him?" asked Louise, after some hesitation; "you do not know him——"

"Not personally, but Baldwin has learned a good deal about him since Harry McCoy died. He says he is a very promising young minister, esteemed by older clergymen. He likes mission work, and has great success in it. He refused lately a fine salary and a wealthy church near the city, in order to stay with some working, poor church here."

When Louise made no reply, Miss Page inquired:

"Do you know anything against him?"

"O no, certainly not."

"But you have some reason for disliking him, have you not?"

"No, Cousin Janet, I do not dislike him in the least. In fact I—I—have not seen him for three—for a long, long time."

"Well, then, just tell me what you do know of him."

"I know that Baldwin tells the truth. He is a great worker, and every one likes him."

Miss Page sat a while without speaking; then in a tone very persuasive for one usually so peremptory, she remarked:

"You are keeping something back, Louise Norton, I know you are."

"Well, will you not believe me that it is nothing to his discredit. He is one of the most upright, pure minded men I ever knew. He has fine talent, and a gift for winning the respect and love of the poor. He understands human nature—that is, in dealing with what people call the 'masses.' Now, what more could you ask?"

"I could ask to know why you do not or

did not seem anxious to have him as our helper?" said Miss Page, calmly

"I think he would be just the very man of all others to help you," expostulated Louis with a kind of distressed vehemence. Then getting no reply, she went on: "I must tell you now, or you will imagine all sorts of things. Well, a few years ago I spent my summer vacation in L——. It is a lovely little village, and I had engaged board in a nice family; but the week I entered the family, two of the children were taken very ill, and all sorts of domestic catastrophes began. I staid and helped the mother until she got a capable nurse; then the servant (she kept only one,) grumbled at the size of the family. The lady of the house asked me if I would not go across the road and board with a very pleasant widow who had an invalid daughter, and would gladly take me as a boarder. I went and found Mrs. Flemming (the mother of this minister), a very excellent elderly lady.

She told me she was supported by her two sons; one was a young man, in a bank, on a salary, the other was preaching over a poor church here. During the summer the latter had a vacation and spent it at home. We became very well acquainted, and I found him just such a man as I have described to you. Living under the same roof, in a small refined family, we naturally saw considerable of one another, and——"

"And he fell in love with you, no doubt," suggested Miss Page, smiling in the shadow where she sat.

"Yes."

"And you?"

"I liked him—very much; we were engaged when I came back to my teaching. That winter, when there was need of a new music teacher in our seminary, I happened to tell him of the fact, and he gave me the address of a lady who could fill the place admirably. She was his own cousin. Well, the trustees

of the school made inquiries, and at last engaged her. When she came I liked her very well—not unreservedly, however, and I have come to think since then that I had a true intuition that she was insincere. I believe she never liked me, but we were exceedingly friendly. She soon learned that Mr. Flemming was engaged to me, and she was very free to talk of it to me, to tell me all about herself and of him, his family, their circumstances—how hard had been their past struggles with poverty. A year went by, and I agreed to be married in the winter holidays. Mr. Flemming's salary was small, but we planned to live very economically, and then have enough for him to spare the same amount that he had always given to his mother. In August his younger brother died, after a sudden, severe illness, and soon his sister was attacked with a new and peculiar malady, requiring the advice and services of the best physicians. All the support of the

family, then, came on Herbert—Mr. Flemming, I mean, and the expenses were greatly increased. I insisted that our marriage should be postponed indefinitely, and he was forced to see that I was right. We were the same or more even to each other, because he needed somebody to cheer him, and we were, of course, engaged to be married when times were brighter.

Miss S., his cousin, knew all this, but she took care to tell me continually how heavy a load my friend carried, and that physicians said his sister would soon have to be kept in a private asylum, which would be very expensive. She laughed a great deal about an heiress, who liked Mr. Flemming, and told me she had joined his church and begged him to use her money freely for mission work. I laughed with her. She did not tell me that she was always laughing at him and telling him, with some motive, which I can hardly now think to have been mere mischief,

that I had a wealthy admirer, one of the patrons of our school. This was true, and she took care that Mr. Flemming should see flowers that he would send me—this rich man, I mean. I understand now many things I could not make out then. Meanwhile Miss S. gradually worked on me, until I feared that Herbert might wear himself out with over-work. I could not love or marry any one else, but I began to reason that while I could trust him forever, he might feel freer to give more time and thought to his home duties if we were not engaged. I suggested this to him at last, and I was grieved and angry to find him, as I fancied then, capable of distrust and of jealousy. I did not know what I know now, that while he was weary and low spirited, seeing no time when he could share with me anything but poverty—that then his cousin was telling him I might be mistress of an uptown mansion, if I would accept Mr. H. He loved me, but he would not be self-

ish, so when he was trying to find out if I could be happy with any one else, I thought him suspicious. It was a miserable interview, from beginning to end. I intended to show him, that I would never be a clog on him; that if his mother and sister needed him he must be everything to them that love and duty prompted him to be—that while he was so poor, he must not have a wife. I only succeeded, I think now, in confirming him in a belief, fostered by his cousin, that I ought no longer to be bound to him; that I was sacrificing myself to a long, hopeless engagement. From that point it was easy to go on in a misunderstanding, which ended in our breaking the engagement. I never saw him after that day, until the evening when he came to see Harry McCoy. Miss S. left the school long ago. You can easily see, I should be very unwilling to seek his acquaintance again. I have no doubt he has gotten all over his old affection for me—he could have

made all right between us before this, if he had chosen. His sister died a year ago, and he has made himself a name and a position since I knew him."

"Thank you, Louise, for giving me this confidence. I see now that my ideas are hardly feasible. If I ever ask this man's help, I will take care that it is in no way that will prove unpleasant to you. Poor girl, you have not trodden on roses after all—and you have kept so bright and cheerful."

"Oh, what was the use of sitting down to cry?" replied Louise, with a laugh, that failed to be merry, and then she began to talk of something else until it was time to retire.

* * * *

It was remarkable how soon every one became accustomed to the new comfort, order and cheerfulness which reigned in Miss Page's reformed house. Dolly found a capable young girl, well known to her, who wished a situation, and after a little persua-

sion Miss Page engaged her to keep in order the newly arranged rooms, to wait at the better regulated table, to open the front door. People began to come to this door again, for one of Miss Janet's first moves was to call on all her former acquaintances, so long neglected, and to take pains to show them that she was about to start on a new line. Naturally, this made some gossip, but the impression gained that she had been insane on account of trouble, and had now recovered her health. She represented an "old family;" she appeared once more well dressed, and well behaved—so many friends returned her calls, and new relations with the world were resumed.

"I am much too old, and I have suffered and learned too much," said Miss Page to Louise, "ever to be again 'in society,' but I want to be again in the world. I seem to care for people in a new way."

Very little of her time was spent in this

manner, after all. Under Baldwin's supervision the tenement houses were made comfortable, as well as wholesome places of abode, and the house across town was undergoing a thorough transformation. Miss Page frequently asserted, nowadays, that she could not afford to make mistakes in regard to her work hereafter, and therefore she sought and adopted the best advice from men and women of experience. The McCoys remained in the house, and as the process of remodelling it went on, they gave good service in work. Every morning Miss Page was on the spot, overlooking the changes, and almost every afternoon she was inspecting Homes, Asylums, or Coffee Houses, getting "ideas," as she said. She suggested a city missionary, a person of experience, to serve her in various ways, and Mr. Flemming's name was never again mentioned. Sometimes, when Louise, impressed by the wisdom of a new measure, would express great appro-

val, Miss Page would say: "Oh, don't praise me — I am not capable of such bright ideas: I have a multitude of counsellors;" then Louise would think, "If he were one of them I should suspect the plan was his."

It was Miss Page's desire to have the house finished by Christmas. She wanted to have then her machinery for winter work all in order, and on that particular day to have a housewarming: to this end all her energies were directed.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE DAY'S WORK.

DAYS and weeks passed. Christmas came. Early in the morning of that day, which was dark and intensely cold, a closed carriage was waiting before Miss Page's door. The coachman had only beaten his cold hands together a few times, when the door opened, and out tripped Miss Janet Page and her cousin. They seated themselves comfortably in the carriage, and were driven rapidly down town, while Louise exclaimed: "Cousin Janet! You look twenty years younger, and a century happier than you looked six months ago, if happiness can be measured by years."

"I can believe it; I feel as if I had drop-

ped a long time of gloom and bitterness out of my life, and that now God was giving me, not my youth again, but a brief time, before my days are all numbered, to show my love to him. Every day I thank him for the chance, and for my wealth."

Louise smiled back in sympathy, and they were silent for a while, only Louise could not but think to herself over and over again: "How she is changed!"

Miss Page's personal appearance had much to do with this impression. She had never been actually untidy, but the garments she wore had never troubled her in the least. Now she had put off her unnecessarily old ugly apparel with the roughness and asperities of her speech.

To-day she wore a dress, antique in pattern, but becoming, in a quaint, pretty way; a soft lace handkerchief was knotted around her neck, and her whole air was that of a little old-fashioned lady—but a lady without a

doubt. Yes, her face seemed actually changed! The sharp eyes were softer, the stern lips smiled peacefully. Her cheeks were fuller, her complexion fresher, on account of the more generous fare and the much out-of-door exercise she had taken of late.

The carriage rattled over the pavements, down and across town, toward the street where stood the old house, but the renewed house. The exterior was not greatly altered, save by the addition of a larger doorway, and the changes made by fresh paint and new glass. As Miss Page's foot touched the threshold, Don, with a shining face and a new suit of clothes, opened the door, smiling rapturously. All the stains and cobwebs had vanished from the hall; it was lighter and more like a reception-room, for one-half of it had been cut off and the first cheerful sight that greeted the new comers was a fire-place, with a brilliant open fire. The old parlors were ready now for various uses. One was

plainly fitted up for a reading-room, and against the walls in neat cases were several hundred books adapted to different readers. On the tables were pictures, games, papers and magazines. Over the mantel piece was a beautiful large engraving of "The Good Samaritan." This room could be made one with the back parlor, which was arranged for a Sunday-school. All the rest of the house was this day open for inspection, and Miss Page darted about from room to room like an excited child. In the basement was a room where hot coffee, hot soup and other simple refreshments were to be sold at the very lowest rates. On the upper floors were neatly furnished rooms, already let to working girls. Each department of the simple establishment was in charge of a competent person, and in detail the proposed management of all seemed sensible, feasible and truly charitable.

"I don't expect to get any return in

money from this house," explained Miss Page, when questioned. "I expect to spend a great deal on it, but I am not going to make paupers either; I shall be content if the children about the streets will be attracted here to learn simple Bible truths, if the wild boys will spend time over my books and games, instead of gambling or drinking. I shall know that at least a few hard-working honest women have good beds, warm rooms, cheap, wholesome food, and are helped in every way possible. I want my old house, so long dreary and desolate, to be now warm —alive, like a beating human heart, a heart of love and sympathy."

Not long after Miss Page and Louise arrived, many invited visitors of various kinds came, one set after another, and none of them went away until they had been shown all over the house, taken to the dining-room for a nice lunch, and given tickets for the evening exercises in the parlors. None of these

visitors were "society people." They were in one case the friends of the young women who rented rooms here. Again, a "worker," whom Miss Page had found, and was using, came with a dozen or more wild boys ready for any wild deed. Had the earnest-hearted young man who led them known any less of boy nature, or had a manner less genial, winning and magnetic, they might have set all order at defiance; but as it was, they did not leave before some had glanced with favor at the games or the magic lantern, some had opened an attractive book, and all had eaten a "square meal," given them as they knew by the white-haired Miss Janet, who had been "so good to Harry McCoy." She did not know how all of them had talked of him and of her, and agreed that she was "mighty" kind after all, if she was "cracked." All through the day such persons came and went. No disorder occurred, and no policeman showed his face. Miss Page had never

dreamed of anything but order, while Baldwin had been prepared for emergencies. He and the McCoys had made provisions against any trouble from unruly visitors, but their care was needless.

When evening came, troops of children were hurrying toward this house, which for the first time within their memories was warmed and brightly lighted. By-and-by the mothers of the little ones also came begging admission, and none, old or young, were turned away until the parlors and halls could hold no more. The rooms had been trimmed with Christmas greens and pretty banners; the programme had been gotten ready with due reference to the crude taste and the ignorance of the audience. Many of Miss Page's "counsellors" were there, but no long speeches or tiresome exercises were permitted. There was lively music, hearty singing of joyful carols, magic lantern pictures, and little by little the listeners were made to un-

derstand that this place was hereafter to be theirs. Here they could take a rest, get good for body and mind, find friends, get hints about outside situations—have their children taught pure, good things.

There was but one real address. Miss Page had told Louise that she wished one, and for that talk to her "parish," she must select some wide-awake, warm-hearted Christian man, who would not weary the young or offend the old. Some one able to leave in their hard hearts and dull brains, this Christmas night, a lasting impression—a tender thought of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whom Miss Page had found for the speaker, Louise forgot to ascertain. She was so busy all day that she gave no thought to the evening until she found herself singing carols with the children. When Miss Page whispered to her: "Shall we give the children their little gifts before the minister talks to them, or after?" she replied: "Afterwards; for I think they

will be too excited to hear a word he says if they have them first."

She did not even look towards the end of the room to see "the minister," until his first words fell on her ear. Then she turned very pale, and sank to the seat which Don had been keeping empty for her. Perhaps the other listeners paid better attention to Mr. Flemming's address than this one, who had room in her mind for only one thought; that Mr. Flemming was here in her presence. Just before he ended, she looked steadily at him, shielded from his sight, by a woman before her. What a fine, clear cut face he had! What a clear, rich voice! Yes, he was good, one of the best men on earth, strong and gentle; but he did not understand womankind, or he never would have judged her so incorrectly.

After the speech came a merry time for all Louise's scholars (and near Christmas time their numbers had greatly increased); all these

received a little gift, and a generous supply of candy and oranges. When the last eager hand had been filled, grateful "good-nights" began to be said, and soon the children were gone.

A little crowd of Miss Page's "counsellors," and fellow-workers surrounded her, and Louise, not seeing the late speaker among them, was about to join the group, when Mr. Flemming appeared at her side. He did not greet her or offer his hand, but he said:

"I tell other people that it is good to be unselfish—but a few years ago I tried (nobody knows what it cost me) to be unselfish, and every day since I have bitterly regretted my effort. Do you know what I mean?"

Louise did not look up, her cheeks grew very pink, as she answered:

"Perhaps not. I have not always understood you in the past—but one thing is certain, you have not believed me unselfish."

She had not meant to rebuke him; she was

too proud to seek an explanation of his acts or thoughts, but in speaking out suddenly her secret grievance, she gave him the chance longed for—the chance Miss Page had planned for, when she chose her speaker.

"Perhaps I have not understood you, Louise! Perhaps you have not known me and my motives. Now, because I love you to-night, as I loved you three years ago, better than any one else in the world, will you let me find out what all this miserable separation has come from?—If you would only let it end!"

No one interrupted them. Miss Page seemed to have long confidences to share with her friends, but her keen eyes saw beyond her own circle. She saw two very earnest faces, and feared at first that all was not going happily; but soon in the shadow of an arch of hemlock, Mr. Flemming took possession of Louise's hand, and their dialogue was prolonged. When at last they were

interrupted, Louise sought Miss Page, and followed her silently about with very bright eyes.

"I hope, Louise," said the spinster mischievously, "that Mr. Flemming's presence here to-night has not affected you unpleasantly. I thought it might not make any difference with you."

A new light broke over the young lady's face, as looking quickly into Miss Janet's eyes, she exclaimed:

"And you thought, too, that it might make a difference. Confess that you have been scheming!"

Miss Page laughing gleefully, only put the question:

"Has it? Are you any nearer understanding one another?"

Before Louise could reply, Mr. Flemming held out his hand to Miss Page, saying:

"My good friend, I have been lately constantly congratulating you on the success of

your undertakings; now I want your sympathy with my happiness. Louise says you know something of the past, so you will not be greatly astonished to learn that in the future—the near future, we expect to marry."

"I have something to say about that," retorted Miss Page, laughing. "I have engaged Louise for a year. She cannot leave my house until the year expires, but I will be merciful. I would let you come and be my private chaplain—yes, we will arrange all that."

A little later Miss Page and Baldwin were seeing the rooms made ready for the morrow, when the established order was to begin; then with a few last words to the matron, and more to the McCoys, Miss Page prepared to go home.

"I never saw a woman more changed than Mrs. McCoy is," said Baldwin; "when I first saw her she was a worn-out, discouraged

creature. Now she takes such an interest in this place and seems so grateful to you, that she is going to be great help here. The matron says that with her and Jessie she can run the establishment ten times more smoothly than with other outside help; even Don fits in as a door-tender and errand boy."

"Yes, and Don will make his mark some day," returned Miss Page, adding, "I shall help him to do it if my life is spared. Now, Baldwin, call the carriage, and I will go in a minute. I want to take a look up-stairs."

Baldwin went for the carriage. Louise and her friend were talking in a quiet corner, without thought of time or surroundings. Miss Page, glad to be unnoticed, turned and ran up-stairs, going to that room that she had kept locked for years. The door was not closed to-night, the gas in it was lighted. It was warm and bright, made smaller and greatly changed. Now the furniture was

simple; a few seats, a writing-desk, a case of carefully chosen devotional books, a table, and an open fire, cosily glowing in the grate.

"The people in the house will call this my office," thought Miss Page, "and it is just as well; but to me, this place can become something infinitely more and better than it has ever been. Here I will pray, and study my long neglected Bible—here I will try and draw to me wounded lives, sad, or simple hearts, anybody whom I can by word or deed help up and on to better things; as little Don said, I am going to care for my neighbors. My old house is a thing of the past. I am done with it forever. My old life I trust God has forgiven. The new house can, with the blessing of heaven, be the Inn, where Good Samaritans may bring in the hurt from life's highways and out of 'compassion,' bind up their wounds."

With a heart full of emotion, Miss Page

glanced once more about the room. Her eyes fell on the spot where formerly had hung the tarnished mirror that reflected her girlish face on the morning of her bridal day. No mirror hung there now, but in illuminated letters, was the beautiful old motto:

"Would'st have a friend?
Would'st know what friend is best?
Choose God thy Friend, who passeth all the rest."

CHAPTER XII.

HERE A LITTLE AND THERE A LITTLE.

IN the fourth story of the renewed house was a little room, scarcely larger than a spacious closet. This little room, daintily clean, its walls and floor of natural woods, its furniture cheap but tasteful, was to its inmate, Jessie McCoy, the most attractive place wherein she had ever possessed any rights, for it was all her own. When her many duties about the house were done, she could come here and think. It seemed to her that she had never been able before to think, in the worry and struggle which had crowded much that was restful and pleasant out of her young life. Ever since she ceased to be a child, her time and thoughts had been spent

in answering the one question: "From what source were they to get food, fuel and clothes? A great burden had now been lifted from her shoulders by Miss Page's help, and as a result, the whole aspect of life was changed.

Mrs. McCoy seemed to have become ten years younger; she had gained energy, ambition, and a hearty zeal in carrying out Miss Page's plans. Jessie felt the same degree of gratitude toward their benefactor; but after all she was conscious (and a little surprised by the fact) that she owed even more to Louise Norton than to Miss Page. True, the latter had placed her where she might, in quiet and safety, support herself; and for the neat room she so much enjoyed, the good warm apparel she could wear, and the wholesome food she could now afford, she thanked Miss Page most sincerely.

What Louise had done for Jessie was not so apparent, yet it was as real. In the past Jessie had been superior to the young women with

whom she had come in contact; but in saying this not much is claimed for her. Where other shop-girls had been loud, vulgar and bold, Jessie had retired within herself, keeping modest and self-respecting. Now, since Louise had become known to Jessie, she had stirred in the younger girl's heart, earnest desires to be "better" — more helpful to others, more gentle and pure. Without really willing so to do, Jessie had taken Louise as a model in all such ways as seemed to be practical. She was by far too sensible to ignore the social differences between them, and to copy her in externals, but she read the books that Louise liked, she studied her tastes, her principles, and she followed her advice to the letter.

One afternoon she sat in her room sewing by the fading daylight. After a while she was forced to stop, and dropping her work, she sat looking out on the view she could enjoy even from this window of a city build-

ing. She was now high enough to see over the house-tops, out on the surface of the water, now all tinged with rose color and gold. She was so absorbed in thought that she did not hear Louise Norton, who first spoke at the open door, then entered. However, at a friendly touch on her shoulder, she sprang up to give her visitor the seat of honor.

"Jessie," asked Louise, after a pleasant greeting, "how many young women are there now in the house?"

"Ten in all; two English dressmakers, nice girls, three pretty wild shop girls, who are clerks; two copyists, a visiting governess and two girls who sew in shops.

"And does everything go on pleasantly?" asked Louise.

"Well," replied Jessie, hesitatingly, "everything has gone smoothly so far, but I want you to tell me what to do now. These girls are all at home evenings, or they have

been, until lately, the five shop girls have begun to go out, and they do not behave so well as at first. I spent a few evenings with them, but all their talk was of new fashions, or silly speeches of the 'gentlemen clerks' in the shops; so I did not enjoy it, and they think now that I 'put on airs.' I am sorry, for I promised Miss Page to be one of them, and to make them feel at home here; but I don't know how to go about it. Perhaps you had better talk to them."

"No, Jessie, that would not be the best way. I will tell you what I will do; you ask them all to meet me in Miss Page's office to-morrow evening. She will not be there, but I will bring an interesting book, and we will form a little club, to meet twice a week. I will get books, bright, good ones, and once a week I will read all the evening, with intervals for informal talk about our story. For the other nights we will plan something else; perhaps, in some way, you can help

them, and learn with them without offending their vanity."

"What do you bother wth them at all for, Miss Louise—or with me?" asked Jessie, suddenly; "you have no need of us, your life is full of ways of enjoying yourself. If you should go to church and should teach in Sunday-school and tried just to be good yourself, as you are, anyway — most people would think it was enough."

"Most people think very foolish things, then, Jessie, and as a wise man said once: 'It is not enough to be good—we should be good for something.' I 'bother,' as you call it, over these homeless, friendless girls because they are worth it. They have souls to be made purer for this world, and to be saved for the next. The more we love the Lord, Jessie, the more we shall care for other people. If you begin to help others from that motive, you will not get discouraged."

Jessie did not make much of a reply, but

she remembered Louise's words, and that conversation was the beginning of good.

The next night nine of the lodgers met in Miss Page's office. Some, as the two English sisters, came promptly, bringing their basket of mending, and expressed plainly their pleasure at the proposed plan of reading together; the two copyists dropped in with a doubtful air, as if they might be bored; the shop girls came late, giggling and undecided about staying long. The room was very bright; Louise was a fine reader; the book was not at all dull. A basket of cakes and fruit sat on the table behind the reader, and when the guests had listened, and eaten, and chatted socially together, they were heartily ready for a club. They were not foolish enough to think that Miss Norton sought their companionship for its own sake; they sagely suspected that she had designs on them, was trying to do them good, but if

they enjoyed her experiments, why not let her work unhindered?

"Were they all here?" she asked, when the last one had gone out, leaving her alone with Jessie.

"All but Kitty Prior; she is the youngest and the prettiest girl in the house; she said she had an engagement and could not come."

"Is she the girl with great dark eyes—the one who dresses in a rather dashing way? I have met such a girl here, once or twice."

"Yes, she is very lively or very sad—I don't understand her, but she is always very kind and obliging."

"I must seek her out," replied Louise, and Mr. Flemming appearing just then in the door, Jessie discreetly vanished.

"Miss Page sent me after you," he exclaimed. "Of course, I was very reluctant to come, but I try to do my duty like a man."

"If the effort ever costs you too much exertion," returned the young lady, mischiev-

ously, "you can send Baldwin; he made an excellent escort before you appeared on the scene."

"I have no doubt that he did; he's paid well, and I owe Baldwin unending gratitude on my own score. If he had not found me, when would I have found you again?"

As Jessie McCoy was going through the hall that evening, she met her mother, who detained her, saying: "Wait a moment, Jessie, I want to speak to you."

"What is it? You look tired."

"I am tired, and that is it; I want to go to bed now, for my head aches."

"Well, go right away, I will attend to all your work for the rest of the evening," said Jessie, promptly.

"There is something I promised to do," began Mrs. McCoy, hesitatingly, and I did wrong, perhaps; but Kitty Prior teased me so that I could not refuse. You know she

made that nice white apron for me last week, and she would not let me pay her."

"Yes, but what did Kitty want to-night?"

"She wants to stay out about an hour after the house is shut for the night; and I promised to get up or to stay up and let her in. She has gone to the theatre with some friends. There is no harm in Kitty, only she is a little giddy."

"You want me to let her in?" said Jessie, slowly. "Well, I will; for now she is out, some one must let her in, and you are too tired to sit up; but, mother, we must not agree ever to do this again. Miss Page has given us all to understand that certain rules of the house must be kept. It is not good for girls who have to work hard all day to be out nights."

Jessie's tone was respectful, but firm; she was sorry that her step-mother had been so weak as to yield to Kitty's pleading. Mrs.

McCoy meant well enough, but she lacked good judgment.

"I know, Jessie—I know it was foolish in me, and I shall not do it again, so don't worry. Just set up for her this once;" and so saying Mrs. McCoy went on up-stairs.

Jessie, left alone, took a book and went to her room to read, until the matron should lock up the establishment. "Then," said the young girl to herself, "I will go down and let Kitty in this once, and to-morrow I mean to tell Miss Louise that I did it; for it is against the rules."

It was more than an hour before Jessie knew by various signs and sounds that the house was being closed for the night. Later, when there was perfect silence in the halls, she ventured out, and down to the basement. It was chilly and very uncomfortable waiting there for a long time, in the dimmest possible light, for naughty Kitty; so by-and-by Jes-

sie lost all patience, and fell into a train of thought like this :

" Kitty Prior ought to be ashamed of herself; she is a silly little fool, who is mighty proud of her pretty face. She is no better looking than I am this moment; but I think a great deal too much of myself to behave like this. I mean to give her a piece of my mind when she comes—she needs it."

Before this mood of Jessie's could pass, Kitty unfortunately returned. At a gentle tap on the door, Jessie aroused herself from her stiff position close to the fire, and with her indignation thoroughly working, she went to let in the delinquent.

" Why, Jessie! I thought—it would be your mother," stammered Kitty ; and even in the dim light of the basement, Jessie noticed how pretty she was, her large eyes bright with excitement, her cheeks crimson, and a bunch of gay flowers thrust in her cheap lace

neck-tie. Somehow her beauty made Jessie sharper.

"Mother went to bed hours ago; she was too tired to sit up nearly all night, so I have done it; but it is the last time, I can tell you, Miss Kitty."

"My gracious, how cross you are!"

"Well, I have a right to be cross and disgusted. This house is for quiet, respectable lodgers, who mean to be in at reasonable hours. I am as young as you are, Kitty Prior, and I like amusement, though I may not get much; but I would be ashamed to run the streets as you do——"

"Look here, Jessie McCoy; you stop all such talk as that. I have been to the theatre with people as good as you, or any of your friends. Who are you to take on such grand airs? Miss Page picked you and your mother out of the street; for your mother told me so."

"You will find out who I am!" retorted

Jessie, hotly, "and you will find out, too, that Miss Page listens to what I have to say; when I tell her of you, she will send you out of this house, I know she will."

"Let her! Do you suppose there is no better place than this dull old house in the city? It is nothing but a—a—sort of an asylum, any way! and I was teased this very evening to leave here and go where I could have more fun, when my day's work was done. So, Miss Jessie, you'll never have another chance to lecture me, and you can tell of me or not, as you see fit."

Kitty's voice was very full of passion, and dashing by Jessie, she rushed up-stairs to her own room.

Jessie staid behind to see that the door was locked, the gas turned still lower, and all right; then she mounted the stairs slowly, her spirits suddenly depressed and her wrath cooling very rapidly, as certain thoughts entered her mind. She had not told Kitty any-

thing that was really untrue or very unjust, but the result of her words was not satisfactory—was rather alarming. Had she carried out Miss Page's aims in trying to enforce her rules? As Jessie passed the office door, and remembered Miss Louise and her careful interest in these girls, she recalled her words: "the more we love the Lord, Jessie, the more we will care for other people. I care for these homeless, friendless girls, because they are worth it; they have souls to be made pure for this world and saved for the next."

With a thrill of fear Jessie realized that she had been just now doing her best to push thoughtless, reckless Kitty out from a safe shelter, into a thousand dangers. These "friends," of whom she talked, might be anything but kind or helpful; the pleasant place to which she would flee, might be veritable quicksands.

In the quiet of her own pretty room, her

conscience would not let her find rest. As she looked at the little shelf of books given her by Miss Louise, at the basket full of work for which Miss Page was to give her generous pay, she thought to herself, "I am safe and happy now, chiefly because of these Christian women who are kind to me, and who want me to help them to help others. Oh, I ought to be ashamed of this night's work!"

She could not get sleepy. The fog bells on the river, the fire alarms in the neighborhood, all the usual nocturnal sounds annoyed her. Finally she sprang up, dressed herself hastily, and crossing the hall, sought a certain door. Why she fancied that Kitty would be also awake, Jessie could scarcely have told; but Kitty was awake, and moreover was breaking another house rule; for from under her door crept little tell-tale rays of light. When Jessie rapped slightly, they were instantly extinguished, and no one answered.

"Kitty," said her visitor, in a loud whisper, "please let me in. I want to see you a minute very much; just open your door and let me speak."

After a moment, apparently of indecision on Kitty's part, the door opened. Jessie entered quickly, and turning up the gas perceived Kitty dressed as before. She had been packing her possessions as if for departure; a shabby little trunk was pulled into the middle of the room; while tossed about on the bed and chairs were a few articles of cheap finery and garments, some far too showy for use, some greatly in need of repair.

"Well, what is it now?" asked Kitty, shortly.

Jessie, seizing both her hands, pulled her down to a seat beside her, saying: "I was horrid to you a few minutes ago; I don't know what ailed me to be so ugly. I forgot, Kitty, that it was just exactly as you said. I

owe everything to Miss Page. I should not be here but for her; she established this home just on purpose to help people in various ways. One thing she wants is to make a nice comfortable place for working girls like you and me. Now Kitty, I will not tell of you at all if you ask me not to do it, only don't stay out again after hours, will you, Kitty?"

"Oh, I suppose you were all right," said Kitty, relenting perceptibly. "If Miss Page makes rules (and she has to have them) they must be kept. This is after all no boarding-place for me; it is better for steady, older girls, who never want any fun."

"But Miss Page don't mean that; she says such people can take care of themselves; but girls like us—we need some one to watch us. She wants this house to be pleasant."

Oh, it is; the rooms and the food are better than I ever had," said Kitty, slowly twirling a flashy ring on her finger, but I was think-

ing of leaving here, anyway. My friends are farther down town, and some of them have teased me to-night to go to a boarding-house where it is very lively."

Jessie tried not to suggest anything offensive in her tone, as she asked, rather plainly: "Are your friends really the best sort of friends? Are they old ones, whom you have known long, and who really care for your comfort and health, as your relatives would care?"

"No, perhaps not; but they are well enough, nice lively girls, and—"

Jessie smiled, but as Kitty did not finish her sentence, she asked again:

"Hav'n't you any old friends or relatives in the city, Kitty?"

"No, my home was in the country, near Philadelphia. Father was a poor carpenter, my mother died when I was little. I had a step-mother who did not like me, and we quarrelled; then father told me to go and

earn my living, so I ran away with some girls from Philadelphia, and we came here. I've tried to take good care of myself, and I've always had respectable places. You had no right to talk to me as you did to-night," exclaimed Kitty, suddenly firing into new anger.

"I know it, and I am sorry. Don't lay it up against me, and don't stir out of this house now, I beg of you;" replied Jessie.

Kitty was easily pacified. She now rose and began to walk about; stopping before the little square looking-glass, she gazed into it at her own face reflected there, and at Jessie's also, as clearly to be seen.

"Jessie, don't you wish you could have pretty dresses, and bright feathers, and lovely artificial flowers, and sparkling ear-rings, bracelets and necklaces? We are a great deal better looking than hundreds of rich young ladies. Every day sallow, homely, bony girls come into our shop, and buy the

loveliest silks and laces, that they must look horridly in. I don't see why we must wear dingy old clothes, and work so hard just to keep ourselves in bread and water."

"Somebody has been putting such ideas into your head, Kitty. Now tell me honestly, if I am not guessing right?" said Jessie.

Kitty fidgetted about, her cheeks a little redder, as she exclaimed, with an evident wish to change the subject, "Oh, don't you worry. I shall not steal any Paris dresses out of the shop, I assure you."

"Miss Louise was here to-night," said Jessie, and she asked us all into Miss Page's room to hear her read a story. We are going to get up a club here in the house to enjoy our evenings at home. It was not a bit dull to-night."

"Miss Louise is lovely; but how easy it is for her to be so, with her pleasant life and beautiful home. I wonder if she would be as good in our places? What do we have to

look forward to? What enjoyment can we have, if we don't take it as we can get it?"

Jessie was vaguely troubled. She could have staid there all night, and given Kitty quite sensible advice, the result both of personal experience and judicious teaching; but she felt that some evil influence was working unseen for Kitty's harm. She was impressed with the belief that a wiser, firmer Christian power than she could exert must be brought to bear on the thoughtless girl. All she could accomplish just now, was to prevail on Kitty to unpack her trunk and to promise not to leave the house, as she had threatened. This was not an easy task. Kitty tried to evade her by forced jesting, to turn her purpose, to get rid of her by declaring that she was too sleepy to talk. Finally she broke down and cried bitterly, confessing that she had promised to go to a doubtful kind of boarding-house, where she could see a gayer life, and

go often to concerts, theatres, and have "some excitement."

Jessie would not leave her until she had agreed to remain in her present home for at least one month longer. With this concession she was forced to be satisfied; but she went back to her own room resolved to put Kitty's case into Miss Louise's care.

Kitty, left alone, battled for a long time against new, half understood temptations. When she thought of the few times that Louise had met her, always smiling on her so sweetly, she resolved to stay here, to belong to her Club, to go on in the old quiet way of simple pleasure after hard work. Then another impulse would move her. In the darkness she seemed to hear the gay music of the theatre. She wondered how true the words she had heard that night, could be. Her voice, if untrained, was very sweet; she was young, and pretty, and graceful. Some one had told her that there were

theatres down town where she could learn to be an actress. Such a life must be very full of pleasure and excitement. Could she not have it, and be good and sensible, like Jessie? She did not want to be bad—she, "only wanted some fun." Poor Kitty Prior!

* * * * *

Miss Janet Page often, in these days, asked herself, if really she could be the same solitary maiden lady who one year before cared for nobody, and for whom, as she believed, nobody cared. Now the days seemed scarcely long enough to give her time to attend to the varied interests of her new enterprises. So many lives began to touch her own, so many hands began to be stretched toward her for help. Then, when she had least expected it, she was aware of evil arising to do battle with good. For instance, during the first days of her East-side establishment, she had received from the outside world only encouragement. The women

and children of the neighborhood had for her smiles, thanks, and blessing. The small tradesmen thereabout, were delighted to serve her, if not unselfishly, at least with great faithfulness. It was therefore somewhat startling to her to find out very early in her new undertaking that she had stirred up powerful enemies.

Every rumseller in the street would gladly have seen her "Home," burned to the ground, and from the first hostilities began on their part. Now a number of workmen who had been their steady customers had found that a good hot lunch could be had very cheaply at the new coffee-room in Miss Page's house, and that with the soup, pork and beans, a cup of strong coffee, or whatever they liked could be had for three cents. The bar-room was neglected for the newer resort. Certain young fellows who had enlivened the saloons near by, fell into the way of coming evenings to read the books which Miss Page pro-

vided; and in short, temperance work was quietly put in operation in a spot previously given up to rum-selling and to rum-drinking.

That this was not a work to be carried on undisturbed or inexpensively, soon became evident. Every possible annoyance was experienced by all in authority in the Home. Every pane of glass in every accessible window was mud-stained or broken. Threatening letters were sent to Miss Page, Miss Norton and Mr. Flemming. Malicious persons came to the house and appeared well for a time, in order to remove all suspicions; then books would be defaced, articles stolen or injured and mischief of all sorts done in most ingenious ways which could not be provided against. Had the chief movers in the scheme been impelled by any motives less pure than love to God and men, they would have been discouraged at the outset.

Again there were things within the house which were exceedingly trying to a person

of Miss Page's peculiarities. Louise, remembering her former impatience, wondered at her self-control in these times. Often when some person who was getting far more than that one could pay for (because Miss Page aimed to make her poor people help themselves while she helped them more abundantly), often such a man or woman would insult her with suspicion or treat her with ingratitude.

She developed much executive ability, and more patience; and as Baldwin told Dolly: "It is surprising to see her keep the run of matters as she does. She knows the details of everything done over there, from the coffee used a week to the best way of helping every lodger to keep her temper or afford a warmer dress."

"Yes, it is a change for the better with her, I can testify," Dolly always replied; "now she lets me off with so little watching, and she trusts me to provide enough to eat, even if the apple parings should go to waste."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOUISE'S WEDDING.

AS the winter months went by, Mr. Flemming was obliged to be very decided in the expression of his wishes. He went so far as to declare himself jealous of Louise's new friends and new interests; while he playfully reproached Miss Page for not being in haste to have them marry. Miss Janet maliciously replied that he could hardly give them more of his society if he were married, and that she wanted Louise to herself as much as possible. Nevertheless, the happiness of the young people was constantly in her mind, and she planned wisely and generously for them. She fully intended to have them

make their home with her; with the understanding that they gave as much as they received. Mr. Flemming was invaluable to her as a counsellor, and Louise's bright face and buoyant spirits enlivened the house. Now when Miss Janet's duties were done, she could rest mind and body in the peaceful home-life, with pleasant companionship and bright surroundings. It was at last agreed that the wedding should take place about Easter; but in the latter part of February Mr. Flemming found it desirable to go West for a month, in order to give personal attention to certain important affairs.

The day he decided to go he interviewed Miss Janet, who heard him with equal patience and amusement. When Louise came in from a walk, that afternoon, she found her cousin sitting alone in the library.

"What a very helpless man Mr. Flemming has become," she remarked. "He has to go on a journey, and he feels perfectly in-

capable of taking care of himself. I doubt if he will ever get anywhere in particular, Louise, unless you go and show him the way. I am sorry for you, but I have promised to make you go as his protector."

Naturally enough Louise had much to say on this matter, but she sagely concluded: "On the whole, Cousin Janet, it is best, because now I can have just as quiet and sensible a wedding as I like, without the least reference to the 'style.' Do you know, Cousin Janet, that I am getting the reputation of being peculiar?"

"Well, so long as you are zealous of good works, I don't know that you need be sorry," replied Miss Page, adding: "So this settles the matter, does it, and I am to be left alone for a month!"

For the next ten days there was a little bustle and excitement about preparations. Miss Page's eyes grew dim sometimes with the memories of her own past, as she busied

herself in choosing garments for the fair young bride; who seemed to care for nothing "very grand," as Dolly remarked, with surprise. The other house was for the time neglected, only that a day or two before the wedding, Louise went over there. She had resolved to invite the "Club" for the coming occasion. In the weeks past she had each week met these young women and had come to know every one of them, to feel in their welfare a hearty interest. For their part, they loved her with a devotion full of respect and admiration.

She had read with them books, which she hoped would lift them up and help them; they had profited by the books, but they had read her more diligently. Her manner, her habits of thought, her speech, had all influenced them.

For none of these humble friends had Louise a warmer place in her heart than for Kitty Prior. The girl was so impressible, so

ignorant of the world, so warm-hearted, so defenceless against evil. Jessie McCoy had told Louise of Kitty's intention to leave the house. From the hour she learned of that, Louise aimed at one thing: to gain such a hold on Kitty's affection as to keep her where she was; later she might teach her, but to begin with, she must attract her. She did not flatter her by injudicious attention, but she managed with tact to win her. She often kept her after the Club hour was over to talk of something. She drew from her, little by little, facts of her past and present; not quite all she would like to know, that she might influence Kitty, but enough to show her how to deal with her.

This day spoken of Louise left with Jessie her invitation for the rest, but finding that Kitty was at home, she was moved to ask her in person.

It was late in the afternoon when she tapped at Kitty's door, and the latter opened it,

while in the act of taking off her bonnet and shawl.

"You are just home from the shop, I see, and you look tired, Kitty. I wont keep you from your supper long."

"It rests me to see you," said Kitty, heartily; adding, a little shyly, "I did not think we would see you again very soon."

"Well, I am going away for a few weeks, but when I get back you will see me as often as ever, I hope."

In the pause that ensued, Louise felt, rather than saw that Kitty was looking at her face and her dress in a wistful, childish way that touched her, she hardly knew why.

"You will be a good girl, while I am gone, Kitty, wont you?" she said, half playfully, laying her hand on the girl's luxuriant brown hair.

"Oh, what is the use?—I mean that I don't know how to be really good, and it is hard and dull," said Kitty, her great eyes

filling slowly with tears. I don't mean that I want to do anything—any one thing wicked,—but—I can't tell what I mean."

"I think I know, Kitty. You get tired and lonely, and your life is monotonous. What you need is a Friend, such a Friend as the Lord Jesus Christ. You promised me once, Kitty, to pray for help to do right, and wisdom to know what was right. Do you pray, Kitty?"

"Sometimes."

"What troubles you most?" asked Louise, gently.

Kitty stirred uneasily, and then blushing, asked a question in return, doing it so timidly it could not seem impertinent.

"You are going to marry a very good man, are you not? Are you happy?"

"Yes, I know he is good. I think," laughed Louise, coloring under Kitty's gaze, "that he is the best man in the world, and I am very happy."

"Couldn't you like a bad man?" asked the younger girl.

Some instinct told Louise, that these were not aimless questions, and she answered slowly:

"Not if I had known all along that he was bad—and I never would marry a man whom I did not know to be good, no matter how much I liked him."

"That is because you are so good yourself," said Kitty, in a depressed tone.

"No, Kitty, it is because I know that a bad man would make me or you or any woman wretched."

'If he loved m —— you?"

'The Bible says, Kitty, that the 'tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;' and in the same sense you may say, that the love of a bad man is, after all, like the man himself."

The twilight was deepening in the room, and Kitty felt the atmosphere of sympathy

which Louise brought with her. Clasping her small hands nervously, she said:

"There is a man—I know him pretty well—he wants to marry me.—I am so tired of the shop—I like him, and he seems good, that is, not in your way, but he is generous and pleasant. He means all fair, for he is no higher in the world than I am—but—he—drinks, and gambles, and swears."

"O Kitty! Kitty! He would make you perfectly miserable. He would drag you through poverty and sin," exclaimed Louise; and seizing the young girl's hand, she plead with her as with a sister, to give up all thought of the man. Perhaps at no other time could she have been so eloquent; but now, on the eve of her own marriage, with one whom she reverenced with her whole heart, the realization of what Kitty's lot might be filled her with horror.

"I know how it seems to you," sighed Kitty.

"And you will give him up for your own sake, wont you?"

"I don't—know. If I were good like you he would seem—worse to me—I suppose. Now I love him."

"That was all that Louise could get from the girl, in the way of confidence or promise, and she was forced to leave her, as the hour grew late. She rose at last to go, and invited Kitty to her wedding.

"I have never been among very grand people," said Kitty, lighting the gas. "I thank you ever so much, but I should not know what to do."

"You can come with Jessie, and the rest, and you wont see any very grand people," replied Louise; then she stood a moment, impelled to make one more appeal. Kitty, in her youth, her vigor, her beauty—alas, one could wish that for her own good she were plainer! Kitty was free now; must she become a drunkard's wife, and know all

the bitter suffering which that fate comprehends?

Kitty saw her troubled face in the new light, and exclaimed:

"Don't worry over me, dear Miss Norton. —Perhaps it will be all right. He may get tired and stop teasing me to marry him."

Louise had no hope of that, for even as the girl spoke, her cheeks were like pink oleander blossoms, her whole face, one that a painter would have delighted to put on canvas.

"What is his name? Will you tell me, Kitty?"

"Well—I would rather not, now. Sometime."

Just then some one came to say that Mr. Flemming was waiting in the office for Miss Norton, and the conversation ended.

She found him alone, having come to take her home; but they lingered a moment by Miss Page's desk.

"What makes you look so sad?" asked the gentleman, with some affectionate additional remarks.

"I have just seen another poor girl who has an idea of marrying," replied Louise, half laughing, as she went on. "I did my best to discourage her, but I am afraid it will be of no avail."

"No doubt a similar labor with you might be as fruitless."

"No, it would not. If any one could talk to me as reasonably as I plead with Kitty Prior to-night, I would not marry."

"When I deliver you to Miss Page to-night it will be with strict charge that she lock you up until our wedding-day. I will have no reasonable talkers laboring with you. Forewarned is forearmed, in my case," exclaimed Mr. Flemming, with comical emphasis.

"You need not be afraid. I have counted the cost," said Louise. Then seeing that

her companion was not in haste to end the dialogue, she added: "Come, I have stayed too long here already. Cousin Janet will be wondering why I am late."

They started then for home, but at the foot of the stairs, Louise discovered Don. The moment he saw her his face took on such an intense appealing look, that she was sure he had something unusual to communicate. This was not so, for all he said was: "Good evening!"

An idea struck her, and at the outer door she turned back, saying: "Don, you may come over to our house Thursday evening, and ask Dolly to let you come in."

She was about to add that he might get a treat of cakes and ice cream, but the sudden radiant light in his longing eyes told her that he had been fully informed as to what would go on at the time mentioned; and also that he had received what he wished.

Now, although a wedding is one of the

most interesting affairs in the world to the parties concerned in it, the account of that wedding to outsiders is seldom worth narrating. A few things made Miss Norton's wedding "party" exceptionally pleasant. It was, as the guests said among themselves, so "old fashioned." Louise had left all arrangements except the selection of friends to be invited, entirely to Miss Page, who knew little about and cared nothing for modern fashions. Naturally she had carried out all the ideas of her early life; and while all was on the generous scale of old time hospitality, many were the quaint pretty devices which she revived. Her rooms were filled with people invited because they were wanted, not because she feared to slight them for any social reason. All the old friends she had once been associated with were there. Louise had searched them out so faithfully that more than once in the week past Miss Janet had laughingly protested: "It is not my wed-

ding party ; you will leave no room for your friends and for Mr. Flemming."

But while gray heads were plenty, there were scores of bright young girls, pupils of Louise, and a host of Mr. Flemming's parishioners. When the simply dressed young women from the old house entered the brilliant rooms, their timidity and fear of "grand people" soon vanished, for there were plenty of plain folks beside themselves. Mr. Flemming was going about among his friends, and Louise had not thought it necessary to shut herself away for an imposing entrance just before the moment of the ceremony. She came among her friends with the sweet simplicity of manner which never forsook her. The old people to whom she was a stranger whispered to one another about her beauty ; for to-night her eyes were like stars, and the beautiful color came and went in her rare face. The young ones could not sufficiently admire her dress, and they decided that it was of

a style very new and very exquisite. Nobody knew that Louise had meant to have a "good enough dress," as she told Miss Janet, "but not one too fine for a poor minister's wife."

Miss Page had listened to her in a pre-occupied way, and then said: "I remember a beautiful wedding dress that I—saw once, soft and silky, with creamy lace, but I cannot think of that dress pleasantly. I would like to see another somewhat like it on a happy bride, and forever after think of it in connection with everything bright and good—with the beginning of united Christian lives. I am not often so sentimental, Louise, so won't you let me get ready your wedding-dress?"

The young girl thought she understood this whim of the gray-haired spinster, and consented without a protest; so to-night Jessie McCoy and Kitty Prior assured one another that she was the "loveliest," as she was the best "young lady," they had ever seen. One other person there present agreed with

them heartily; for as Mr. Flemming chatted here and there with old and young, he seldom lost Louise out of his sight.

When Miss Janet's quaint clock in the hall struck eight, a bent old man with snow-white hair, came forward before the younger minister and his chosen bride. Only the oldest persons there knew him by name, but every one fancied that some peculiar emotion thrilled his tremulous tones with a subtle sympathy as he performed the marriage ceremony. Before he ended, just one old person in that crowded room taxed her memory successfully, and whispered to her venerable husband:

'Why, John, don't you know him now? He was Miss Page's old pastor years and years ago. He was to have officiated at her own wedding, that grand affair that never came off, for some reason nobody ever found out;" and John nodded his head vigorously, peering through his spectacles, not at the sweet bride this time, but at the little woman at her

left hand, whose bright eyes were dim, though her wrinkled face was very peaceful.

After the wedding formalities came refreshments, music, and plenty of merriment, if there was no dancing, no wine drinking, no fashionable folly of the usual sort. Every guest received due attention, and from the fact that Kaiser stalked deliberately through the parlor during the evening, Louise argued that his young master was somewhere near enjoying himself.

When it came time to go home, Jessie and Kitty watched their chance to bid their friend an unobserved good-by, and to beg her not to forget them after she returned from her journey.

"No, indeed, I shall not," said Louise, while for each she had a few kind words; giving to Kitty a last word of warning as she pressed her hand.

It was somewhat late when the little party of young women from the Home left Miss

Page's, but there were enough of them not to need any escort, so they refused Baldwin's offer to go with them, and started away together. Jessie and Kitty happened to head the procession; Don and Kaiser to be at the end of it.

A few steps from Miss Page's door a man passed them. In approaching them the gaslight fell full on his face, showing it plainly to Kitty, who, unseen herself, instantly turned and changed partners on some trivial excuse. The man in passing half halted by Jessie, who in figure much resembled Kitty; then seeing Jessie's face, he walked on at once, scanning closely, however, the whole group. Coming suddenly on Don and Kaiser, he quickly pulled his slouched hat lower over his face, walking on rapidly after that. Don, nevertheless, had a second's glance at him, and Kaiser stopped, turned his head and whimpered, as if to say: "We know him, don't we, Don?"

Don stood still in surprise, then dashing past the others, he caught Jessie by her sleeve, exclaiming: "I believe I saw that Van just now! He passed us, and Kaiser knew him too. I've a good mind to run back and tell Baldwin or the police. Shall I, Jessie?"

Jessie did not understand at once. It was Kitty who cried, in a startled way:

"Police—tell them—what for?"

"Why the burglar that got in Miss Page's that time—or the one they are sure stole the silver. They never could catch him!"

Kitty gave a shrill laugh, then broke out vehemently:

"Oh, you goose, Don! If you mean the man who just passed, I know him myself—by sight. He is,"—she went on nervously—"he is a man who often comes to the shop where I work; his name is not Van, at all. You'll get yourself into a fine pickle, pointing out burglars of that sort to the police."

"He looked like the man who used to be with Harry, anyway."

"This was not a bad-looking man," said Jessie, bewildered by Don's words. "He stared at me as he passed, and I saw him plainly."

"But you never saw Van, anyway," said Don.

"Is that so, Jessie?" asked Kitty, quickly; and when Jessie answered: "I never saw him," Kitty turned again to Don, saying, in an emphatic way:

"Well, now, Don, come on; we wont stir up the police to-night. A wedding ought to be excitement enough for us."

They all agreed, laughing, and went on, while Kitty's tongue rattled with unusual energy. Don had supplied her with a text, from which she drew many illustrations. She told half a dozen stories of mistakes in identifying persons, and of very awkward predicaments into which people had brought

themselves by saying that they recognized individuals who proved to be total strangers to them. Before they reached home, Don was fully persuaded that he would have been exceedingly foolish to have acted on his first impulse and set any one on the track of his supposed burglar.

Don was very fond of Kitty. She was always good-natured; then she was so pretty, that the child, who had something like an artist's love of beauty, always yielded to any passing influence Kitty happened to exert. When they all entered the house together, a little later, Kitty drew him somewhat away from the others, saying:

"I want to speak to you, Don."

The little fellow followed her at once, and listened to her attentively.

"Don," she began, excitedly, "of course it is a great pity, that burglar should have got away, but he did escape, and all the silver is probably scattered now to the four

winds. The awful part of it all was the death of your brother, and that can never be undone. Now, if the burglar should be caught, it would all have to come out, before everybody in court, and be put in the papers, that your brother was another thief, or meant to be one. What is the use of that disgrace on Jessie? He was her own brother, you know. Now don't talk any more of this to anybody or before anybody, will you? These people in the house never need to have known of it. Only a few do know it."

Don saw the force of Kitty's words, and promised her to be more reserved in the future.

"Besides," said she, with a winning smile, "think of the trouble you might make for some innocent man or his friends, by setting policemen on his track, or even letting it be thought that he was a suspicious character. I did not take time to-night, to tell you all I know of this man who passed us; he is a

particular friend of—some of my friends."

"All right, I'll remember; but he did look like that Van, though, of course you know."

"Of course," said Kitty, dispatching him with a friendly good-night; then calling him back, she asked in an indifferent tone, a great many questions about this Van, the burglar.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RETREAT.

MISS JANET PAGE missed her "two hands," as she was accustomed to call Louise and Mr. Flemming, and during their absence she experienced many little annoyances from the rumsellers. Several times when she had lingered late in the afternoon at the Home, half-grown boys had crowded her off the pavement, missiles had been thrown at her from alleys, or on reaching home she had found her dresses cut, stained, or slyly injured in some way. Each time she resolved to start home by broad daylight, on the next occasion, but she continually forgot her resolutions, not being naturally timid.

One evening, as she was starting away from the old house, Don joined her with Kaiser, saying: "There is an awful set of roughs around here after dark, Miss Page, so I'm going to the cars with you. You ought to have Baldwin come for you."

Miss Janet had to laugh at the patronizing tone of her small escort, and she could not help saying: "If the roughs attacked me, Don, what would you do?"

"He might do something, if I couldn't," said Don, patting the great head of the dog, who was getting to be a monstrous fellow.

"I don't know about Kaiser, for he let that burglar go past him into my house the night you went out of it, you remember."

"Yes—but you see Kaiser knew him. Harry had made him suppose Van was all right; how could he tell what Van meant to do?"

"Well, I don't suppose we can expect either Kaiser or his master to know every-

thing," returned Miss Page, laying her hand kindly on the pretty boy's head. "Yes, I would like your company as far as the cars."

While they walked along, she asked him questions, and told him that he must soon begin going to school. She did not observe that several children issued from under cover now and then, with mud or rotten apples in their upraised hands, or that Don at such times went through a sort of pantomine which caused them to retire.

Kaiser was too agreeable a friend, and too powerful an enemy to stir up needlessly. As to Kaiser himself, he was apparently not aware of the effect he produced, for he trotted hither and thither, peering into basements, racing into alleys, following canine acquaintances, and occasionally tripping up some rapid walker in the twilight. They were about half through the street when two hard looking young fellows passed them; one stared sharply at Miss Janet, and down at her hands,

then at the child with her. It was Miss Janet's habit to carry a small black bag, not at all conspicuous. In this bag she had frequently considerable money—contrary to the advice of Mr. Flemming and of Baldwin. To-night she had there about fifty dollars. As the rough fellows passed her she clutched the handle of the bag tighter, a motion they could not but notice. They went on, however, and in a moment she forgot them. A few steps farther she came under the shadow of an immense dark factory, closed for the night, and here she was almost out of the range of the gas-light. She did not hear any one cross the road; did not have a suspicion that she had been followed, until she was seized from behind and her arms pinioned close to her body, while a second assailant snatched the bag from her. As this last one turned to run, and Miss Janet was giving a loud cry for help, he knocked Don aside with a vigorous push. Nothing could have been more

fortunate, for Kaiser did not wait for the order that would have come too late. Enraged at the violence done his master, he sprang like lightning at the rough, and held him with a grip that hurt, or the instant groan of pain was no proof. The bag dropped unheeded from the fellow's grasp. Don shrieked "Police!" and "Hold fast, Kaiser!" Miss Janet, who found herself all at once released, joined in Don's cry, when suddenly some person, unseen, but not remote, gave the low soft whistle, which Don always gave to call off Kaiser, and then the dog was ordered to "Let go, Kaiser! Let go!"

The dog dropped to the pavement. The fellow he had held fled fast after the other, who had already started, and while Miss Janet stood trembling, scarcely comprehending what had happened, and what had ceased, Don had picked up the bag, because Kaiser was sniffing at it. But what Don could not understand was who had called his dog, and

whom had the dog obeyed. At that moment, Miss Janet did not care; it was enough that the ruffians were gone, and that she was safe. Hearing not far ahead the tinkle of a coming car bell, she hastened forward, reaching the avenue, which was well lighted and thronged with people. She stopped for breath and let the first car pass, her fright abating.

"Don," she exclaimed, "I am glad, I assure you, that you came with me. I shall not forget my brave little friend, but don't you talk about this at the house. It will worry my friends, and then again, told of on the street it might put it into somebody's head to attempt this some other time. I shall not pass through the street alone again so late."

Don promised to keep quiet in regard to the affair, and went home puzzling over the dog call.

About the time that Miss Janet took the

car, Kitty Prior came out of her room dressed for a walk; she met Jessie in the hall, and the latter said: "What do you think, Kitty! I have had the loveliest letter to-day from Miss Louise! or Mrs. Flemming, I must get used to calling her that. Think of her spending time on her bridal trip to write to us; for one half of it is to you. I would give it to you now if you were not going out. I wish you were not, for I want you to show me how to crochet that edge. A woman in a fancy store offered to buy some of me when I was matching my thread to a bit you made."

Kitty looked half tempted to stay; she pushed back the old plaid shawl from her shapely shoulders, hesitated, then said: "I was going out to spend the evening, but I won't do it now. I will only go to the Avenue for a few linen collars I need, and then come back."

It seemed to Jessie that even at that point she would have remained, but there was really

no reason to urge her to do this, if she would come back soon; so Jessie left her at the door. As Kitty went out she glanced at the clock, and once outside the door she hurried over the pavement, glancing constantly at pedestrians on the opposite side. She had been out but a few minutes, when a well-dressed man struck across the street and joined her, saying: "Well, Kitty, you do keep your word sometimes."

"I am only going to stay out a few minutes, Tom, and I should not have come now, only—"

"Only you knew I wanted to see your pretty face."

"No, I wanted to ask you something; when I have done it I am going back."

"Getting too high-toned to spend half an hour walking with a fellow who can't see you when you are at work, and is not fine enough to visit your family mansion?" laughed her

companion; but his manner, if familiar, was not offensive.

"Tom, do you know any man that people call Van?" asked Kitty, sternly.

"Oh, a dozen Vans, easily—yes, fifty of them; every third Dutchman in the city is a Van."

They came to a gas light then and the girl scanned his face keenly. It was not an ugly face, it was dark, clean-shaven, with well shaped features, and black eyes, which Kitty had seen look very pleasantly on her; but it was a face not to be read by her. If Don were here, it is possible that he could easily be made to confess that he must be mistaken in saying that this was the Van whom he had known. Whoever or whatever this man was, one thing would have been evident to an observer, he was very fond of Kitty.

"Do you know Miss Janet Page, and where she lives?" was her next question.

"She is the scare-crow of a landlady in

the grand hotel of yours, isn't she? No, I never saw her. I must drop in and take a meal there some day."

"Do you know the McCoys? There was a Harry McCoy."

"No," returned Tom coolly, adding, as he took her arm: "It is easy to see you are from the country, for you think I know everybody you hear of in the city."

She was silent a little while, then she suddenly pulled away from him, saying: "I wish you would let me alone, Tom; I will not marry you until I am sure you are telling me everything about yourself. Where is your mother? Let me see her. I am afraid of you."

"Because you saw me a little high that one evening; but Kitty, I never was really drunk in my life; as for the other yarns you have heard about me, they are lies. I can see you don't half believe in me, but you will. Now you find some priest or minister—you

are not a Catholic—so let us get any man you want in some of these chapels around here, and marry me, with no more fuss about it."

So the talk ran on. The Van whom Don knew had not used pleasant tones or good language; but this Tom was evidently assuming nothing in voice or manner, whatever he might be concealing.

He told Kitty to-night of his early home, humble as her own, but respectable; he declared his trade was that of a carpenter, but now he was an "agent," for a business lately started.

He gradually gleaned from Kitty the story of her conversation with Louise, of her desire to be a good girl, in a higher, better sense, than simply to be a respectable girl, and he saw just what was working against him. He was angry at this opposition from outside Kitty's self, and resolved to test his power against it; yet while he was bad, he was not wholly bad. The love he felt for Kitty was

the best thing he had known of himself for years, and he did not think it could harm her. When she was his wife he would not let her know any more evil of him than he could help. He called her "a good little thing," and he liked her to be good, but not too good to marry him.

Their walk was long, and their talk without present results. Kitty tried to provoke him, but he saw her aim, and kept good-natured. At last she insisted that she must go home, and he left her a few rods from the door. He retraced his steps to the end of the block, then turned into a saloon.

"McGinnis's Retreat," was known as the most flourishing rum-shop, in the neighborhood. The police considered it one of the worst holes in the city—although from the street it seemed a cleaner, more orderly place, than many another saloon near by. McGinnis, himself, was a smooth-tongued Irish politician, who had been shrewd enough

to make both politics and rumselling pay well. He owned the whole tenement house of which the saloon occupied the lower floor. The "hotel," was on the second floor, while all the stories above were let to a constant succession of tenants, whose goods were forever being held for rent. In connection with the establishment, was a miserable sort of a restaurant, which had been, in the past, a lucrative part of the business. It communicated with the bar-room, and the workmen from the various factories about here, who came to get a bite at noon, patronized both impartially. Of late, to McGinnis's great disgust, the restaurant business had fallen off. Getting a hint of the cause, he had sent out spies, who returned with altogether too favorable accounts of the enemy's land. McGinnis's coffee was a slop, his meats tough, his pastry supplied from a fifth-rate bakery ; and now, to learn that this "crazy old maid," was furnishing delicious coffee, and well-cooked

food, at half his prices, was exasperating. It added to his wrath to hear that her rooms were warm and light; that there were books and newspapers which her patrons might read, and in fact "traps," of all sorts to catch his old friends.

To-night, when Tom entered the bar-room, McGinnis was smoking his pipe, and sat with his chair tipped against the wall, as he watched Bob and Bill, his bar-tenders, or chatted with some of the callers. He greeted Tom very cordially, for Tom was a favorite here. He always had money, was not stingy, was never drunk enough to be disorderly, knew the world after a fashion, so that he could teach McGinnis something occasionally, and could keep his own counsel.

McGinnis took his pipe out of his mouth and remarked:

"I'm after havin' a foine idee."

Tom nodded his willingness to know it, and

McGinnis proceeded to explain his plans in a tone loud enough to be heard by any who chose to listen. He declared that he was going to make grand improvements. He would turn his restaurant into a concert saloon; then he should hire some "beautiful young ladies," to serve as waiters; and for the diversion of the friends of his establishment, he would give frequent balls, and similar popular entertainments.

"Of course you'll give 'em all to us for nothin'," grunted a burly fellow, as he sat down an empty glass. "If you don't, we'll go to the old woman's show down the street. She has hired a temperance lecturer for next month, and they say he beats any actor on the boards."

McGinnis swore and relapsed into sulky silence. Two vicious looking fellows, talking together in a corner, looked up at this mention of Miss Page, and seeing Tom for the first

time, one nudged the other. This last grinned, and approaching Tom, said:

"Much obliged. If you hadn't happened along with that whistle of yours——"

"You'd have started soon for the country seat on the Island. You are two fools to try such games."

"We didn't know the dog was going to play too; that made the hitch—everything was going fine. How came the beast to know you so well?"

Instead of answering, Tom turned away to get a drink. He was about to go out on the street again, when McGinnis called him back to get his opinion on the improvements, and to ask his help in a certain task. Tom's suggestions were the result of much experience. He had frequented concert saloons from San Francisco all across the continent, and his advice delighted the rumseller. In one respect, however, the latter was disappointed. He had decided to undertake something

which might be profitable to him and annoying to Miss Janet Page. It was not possible for a girl so pretty as Kitty Prior to pass daily through this street without attracting attention. When McGinnis learned that she was a shop girl, boarding at the hated new Home, it occurred to him that he might, by the offer of high wages and an easy life, induce her to come and act as chief waitress in his proposed saloon. At the same time Kitty seemed so quiet and so self-respecting, that he perceived she could not be drawn in to his plans at a moment's notice. He resolved to get Tom to act as his agent in the matter. Tom could make her acquaintance, and after a while tell her of this situation, where she could make twice as much money as she now made at hard work in a dingy shop.

McGinnis added that there was another pretty brown-haired girl who lived in the old house before Miss Page altered it, and that

he had no objections to having her as well as Kitty.

He unfolded his projects to Tom, at full length, and was much chagrined to find the younger man not at all favorably impressed, for some reason, which McGinnis could not easily make out. He was forced to let the matter drop, without getting any promise from Tom to help him.

Had McGinnis or any of his cronies to whom Tom's face was familiar, and who often chatted with him—had one of them been asked to tell all that was known of Tom, he could have told next to nothing. This was of no consequence, however; McGinnis's friends were not required to bring any credentials.

This was the last evening that Miss Page attempted to go through the street without a strong protector; and from this night she well understood that her new enterprises were not to be carried on easily. Time

would fail to tell of all the petty persecutions she and her friends were forced to undergo. The temperance lecturer, of whom the fellow in McGinnis's saloon had spoken, was an eloquent, warm-hearted man, a friend of Mr. Flemming. He had offered to give a weekly lecture in the Home to all who could be gathered in there from the street. The first week fifty men, women and children came to hear him, and five were induced to sign the pledge. News of this found its way to the various rum-holes along the street, and was highly displeasing to their proprietors. The lecture had but just begun on the following week, when a window was pushed violently up, and in dashed a savage great yellow dog, forcibly propelled from without the window. Kaiser, who was decorously seated by his master's side, sprang at the ugly intruder, who being a fighter by profession, began to fight then and there.

The women and children screamed, the

men and boys, who a moment before were quiet and orderly, forgot all decency and respect toward the speaker. The dogs could not be separated, and poor Miss Page was terribly shaken in her nerves before the police arrived and cleared the place of the entire audience; disabling the yellow dog with clubs and dealing some hard blows to poor Kaiser. This was but one of countless such annoyances that Miss Page had to endure while Mr. Flemming was absent, but she mentioned none of them in her letters.

She did write him about a week before his return, that McGinnis had enlarged his borders, had painted and decorated his establishment, done away with his restaurant, and gave instead "free lunches." Worst of all, he had in full operation a place of dancing, card playing, and low amusements, where every night lively music invited the people of the miserable neighborhood to come and be entertained.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONCERT SALOON.

ONE warm day about the last of March, Kitty Prior was selling goods at the "notion counter," in "Peters and Jones', shop, on —— Avenue. Everything had gone wrong with her for a week or more. This state of things began with a series of thefts committed at this counter by some person as yet undiscovered. Each girl had been examined, was watched, and felt herself insulted. For this last fact no one in authority cared; the busiest season was past, more than a third of the girls were to be dismissed soon, and Kitty had been losing favor with her employers. She had more spirit than her companions, who living in unwhole-

some tenement houses and eating scanty, miserable food, were for the most part meek and flabby creatures. Twice Kitty had lost a chance to sell something by admitting that one article was "half" cotton and that another would "fade," and to-day, in the presence of a "floor-walker," she had again offended. A woman was buying tape, and Kitty, instead of bringing down a great box of it from over her head, had been showing samples of it in all widths.

"Why don't you put me down the box, and let me pick it out myself?" snapped the woman, crossly.

"I've shown you every sort we keep," returned Kitty, adding, "the box is heavy, and after lifting boxes down for hours, my arms ache."

"I thought you were here to sell goods," retorted the other, coarsely, and because she was tired, warm, and wickedly thoughtless, she remarked to the floor-walker soon after,

that, "some of the clerks were too delicate to attend to their business,"—indicating Kitty.

A few hours after Kitty was coolly dismissed, as were two other girls from the same counter.

"I don't know what we will do now," sighed one, drearily. "The dull season is coming on, and I have not a cent laid up; have you, Kitty?"

"When I pay my room rent to-night, and buy my supper, I shall have sixty cents left. I bought a common dress and a pair of shoes yesterday."

"Last summer was dreadful," groaned the third young girl, a fair, delicate child, for she looked scarcely more than fourteen. "I lost my place just as I have now, and all I could get to do, was making button-holes in a little hot shop for a woman who paid me a penny for two, and I never could earn over twenty cents a day. If I did not make them slowly and

well, she would not pay me. I hate such living. In this great rich city, why can't it be—different?" And poor Fanny, turned fiercely on Kitty, who answered her only with a bitter laugh.

A moment after she said:

"Did you tell me, once, you could make artificial flowers?"

"Yes—some kinds. I worked at that once."

"Well, I have the number of a place where they hire girls for such work. I can't do it myself, so I don't know why I kept the address," said Kitty, "but come with me, Fan, and I will give it to you."

Fanny agreed willingly, so Kitty and she soon parted from their disconsolate companion, and went toward home.

"What will you do?" persisted Fanny.

"I tell you I don't know!" returned Kitty, moodily.

"How warm it is," exclaimed Fanny.

"Here it is only March, but it smells like summer already."

Again Kitty gave that mirthless laugh before she said:

"If you had ever been in the country in the spring, you would know that it is the city, and not the coming summer that you smell."

"I suppose it must be so," assented Fanny, as borne on the warm evening air there came sickening odors from dirty tenement halls, where doors stood open, and viler odors still from cellars and alley ways.

The girls walked on rather languidly; but in time they came near McGinnis's saloon. Now the proprietor of the establishment, failing to secure Tom's help, had confided his failure to his wife. Mrs. McGinnis was a strapping, great Irish woman, who kept house on the second floor, and who was as proud of McGinnis as if he were an alderman—indeed she saw no reason why he

might not in time attain to that office. She also saw no reason why Kitty Prior should not be easily induced to enter their employ, and she made up her mind "to keep an eye out for the girl."

To-night she espied her coming slowly toward the saloon, and the moment seemed propitious. She flung a little shawl over her head, seized a pot of potatoes off the fire lest they burn, and rushed down-stairs, leaving a youthful McGinnis roaring after her like a bull of Bashan. She drew the girls into a quiet corner, and in her most wheedling way, attacked Kitty with definite proposals. She represented her husband's business as a very commendable and lucrative occupation, respectable to the last degree. First with Irish blarney, she flattered Kitty, telling her that her face would be her fortune; then she pitied poor shop girls, standing "wid' niver a minute to thimselves," from morning till night. So while both girls listened to her in silence

and surprise, she offered Kitty, in behalf of her husband, regular wages for work, which, as she explained it, did seem "light." According to Mrs. McGinnis, Kitty, who must leave the Home, and come to her, would have to help her a little during the day, and at night she might "dress in her best." She would then be expected to do service in the concert saloon, securing custom for McGinnis. The wages offered Kitty were double those previously earned in the shops. Was she tempted?

Yes, and No. She did not want to sell liquor—she had a vague idea that concert saloons were bad—very bad places; but Mrs. McGinnis seemed a respectable woman, and she could live under her protection. If the saloon were miles away from the Home—but at thought of the Home she remembered Louise Flemming. Would she exchange her friendship for the companionship of this blatant red-faced rumseller's wife? Under

the influence of that inevitable question, she firmly refused Mrs. McGinnis's offers.

Fanny, the shop girl, who had been listening, exclaimed at this point:

"You are a goose, Kitty! I'll go in a minute, Mrs. McGinnis, if you will take me."

"No—Fanny, don't," said Kitty, quickly, although she scarcely knew why.

Mrs. McGinnis, a little hotly, bade her not be a "dog in the manger," and Fanny herself retorted: "Why shouldn't I? I want a chance for my life! I'm tired to death of shops."

"True for you, darlin'," said the woman, turning to give her a long, shrewd survey.

Her pale cheeks were flushed pink with the heat and her present excitement. She looked very pretty and girlish, save for the dark rings under her eyes.

"We've a place for two more girls, and I might persuade McGinnis to take ye, only you're not strong, I am sure o' that, and he

couldn't be after payin' ye so much as this foolish one here is a sayin'; no, the more is the pity for her. You're no end silly," she added, returning to Kitty.

They talked a while longer, but Kitty was non-commital. Mrs. McGinnis concluded at last to wait and leave the offer open for a day or two; but she permitted or persuaded (Kitty could not decide which) Fanny to enter their employ that night. She prevented her from going farther with Kitty, and swept her away for a talk with McGinnis.

Kitty went on alone, wondering if any harm in the future would come to Fanny; half wishing she had urged her not to go with the woman. But then Fanny was another motherless, friendless girl. Now she would have shelter and food and good wages. Refusing these, she was not sure even of buttonhole making at starvation rates.

A day seldom passed wherein Miss Page

did not visit her old home; so as Kitty went by the "office" door she was not surprised at all to see the lady sitting at her desk. She had gone a few steps farther toward her own room, when Miss Page called after her by name. Kitty did not think herself very well acquainted with the "old lady," as she considered Miss Janet; but the latter knew of Kitty from talks with Louise.

When the young girl returned, Miss Page arose, and standing by the open window, said: "This is very warm for a March day, Kitty —and now tell me how you are getting along. I think you look a little dragged."

"It is warm, and I am tired," returned Kitty, standing respectfully before the elder lady, who gently pressed her into a chair with such a kindly expression on her face, that Kitty added impulsively, "I am worried too; I have lost my place, and perhaps I have helped somebody else into a bad one."

"Tell me about it," said Miss Janet, interested at once.

Kitty, without being urged—told the whole story of her life, and of Fanny's, at the shop, of their dismissal, of Fanny's dismay, and then of Mrs. McGinnis, and the concert saloon.

The quiet sympathy with which Miss Page listened to the first half of the tale, soon changed to anxiety, until she broke out, "O, Kitty, I wish you had clung to the poor child a little longer, and had brought her here first. I know all about this concert saloon; it was only lately started, but it will be like a door into perdition for any young girl who stays there. We must do something. Do you know what friends this Fanny has?"

"She boards with an aunt who has a house full of her own children, and whose husband is all the time angry that Fanny can't pay more for board. She has no other friends."

"But her aunt can forbid her staying

there, if she is under age," exclaimed Miss Page, excitedly. "See here, Kitty—do you know the aunt's house?"

"I don't remember the number, but I could find the place in Bleecker Street, for I have been there."

"Very well, then; I will send Don for a carriage, and we will drive there, and get the aunt; then we will take a policeman, if necessary, and go to McGinnis's after Fanny."

"Why not go right there now?" asked Kitty, rather surprised at Miss Page's energy.

"Because we might not be able to influence Fanny on the spot to come away, and we have no authority to take her. You do not know the traps of this city, Kitty—that poor child has already stepped into a quicksand."

Almost before Kitty could realize where she was, Miss Page had called the carriage;

hurried Kitty into it, and they were being driven rapidly down town.

"I don't see what we are going to do," began Kitty, and then, lest she might seem to be asking help for herself, she dropped the "we," and continued: "Fanny is out of work, and she can't live on her aunt."

"Your room, Kitty, is plenty large enough for two; you must take Fanny in with you, and we can trust you both for food and room-rent, until you are again at some profitable work."

"You are very kind," said Kitty, warmly.

"Well, it would be a pity if such people as the McGinnis's were the only ones to hold out a hand to you and Fanny in your days of trouble. Every Christian ought to be a friend, and a friend is for hard times, Kitty."

Hitherto Kitty's idea of unusual goodness had been in a certain fashion confused with her admiration of Louise Flemming's elegance and beauty; but to-night her eyes

grew dim and her heart beat warmly as she gazed at Miss Page's time-worn face and prim little figure.

Suddenly the driver jerked up his horse before a barrel of garbage, and Miss Page looked out on the door steps of a house filled to overflowing, if the number of heads in the windows, and the assorted sizes of children in the hall, were an index of the inmates. On the top floor they found Fanny's aunt, a shrewish, tired creature, who showed more vexation than alarm when told of her niece's situation. She declared that she could not leave a "job of ironing," she was doing to go away up town; but she gave Miss Page full authority to take Fanny from the concert saloon, and do for her or with her as she saw fit.

"With seven young ones of my own, I can't do more for the girl than I have done," was her parting speech. "Maybe you think I am hard-hearted, but we poor folks haven't

time to do as we would. He'd say let her stay where she is, if she can earn anything—he'd say that, if he was to home this minute, he would."

Miss Page rightly supposed the "he" was the father of the seven children, so she replied:

"Very well, I will try and find her work in a much safer place," and then she returned to the carriage.

When they reached the Home again it was very dark. Miss Janet, who had been silent for a while, laid her hand on Kitty's arm as they entered the house, saying:

"Go and eat a good supper now, and when Fanny comes, as I hope she will before an hour goes past, make her feel at home. Take time to look for good work, and don't worry. Trust your Father in heaven, love and pray to Him, and you will never slip out of His safe keeping."

Little Fanny was prettier and more attrac-

tive in her manner than any of the girls hitherto hired by McGinnis to wait on his guests, to "drinks," and to induce them to drink as often as possible. He might not, however, have accepted her as readily as he did take her when she was presented to him by his wife, if he had not hoped through her to secure her companion, Kitty.

His approval gained, Mrs. McGinnis gave Fanny her supper, set her at dish-washing for a half hour, and then directed her as to the evening duties.

Fanny's face was "all right," but her attire was very dingy. She was told she must be "dressed up," hereafter, but for this time they must do the best they could for finery. A gaudy sash, a quantity of coarse lace, and some cheap pink cotton roses, with rings, bracelets and chain, all "jewelry," from some dollar store, made Fanny "fit to be seen for once;" then she was initiated into her duties in the saloon. For the first hour she could not

tell if she were most amused or frightened, shocked or puzzled. It is a sad fact that life in a tenement house blunts the sense of delicacy in every child who must endure it. The music excited her. The other girls were very gay and good-natured; there was profanity, loud talk, and much drinking. She shrank behind her companions, until McGinnis, seeing this, expressed his disapproval; but when her pretty face began to attract rude attention, and vulgar flattery, she for the first time dimly realized where she had put herself.

She was startled by a quick whisper and a push from one of the most offensive girls in the room.

"You Fanny, see here! If that is your name—run through that hall and hide, if you want to stay here. Your father is there at the door, and McGinnis is telling him that you aint here now!"

"It is nobody for me. It can't be, for no-

body knows where I am, or cares;" and with the words on her lips, Fanny hastened to the door, even before McGinnis could interpose his huge body to hide her. He pushed her rudely back, but not soon enough for his purpose. A voice that she did not recognize as Kitty's, said: "There, that is Fanny!"

Instantly a policeman strode past McGinnis, took Fanny by the shoulder, and passed her toward a queer little old lady whom she had never seen; while he himself interviewed the disgusted proprietor.

Fanny stood as one in a dream, having no idea why this kindly old person should come to tell her, as she did at once, of the dangers of this concert saloon, of the evil men and bad women she would be associated with. How did a stranger know she was out of work, and who would give her a good home until she could get work, and after that— Oh, Kitty Prior had told of her at the Home! That was the explanation!

Miss Page was talking fast and faster, conscious that Mrs. McGinnis was near by in a towering rage, and only prevented by the presence of the officer from swooping down on Fanny and removing her forcibly.

Unable to restrain her tongue, she burst out with the story of Fanny's begging to be employed; but the officer put a sudden end to the matter by saying: "Very well, Madam, no doubt she wants to stay, but she has nothing to say about it. She is not of age, and her aunt is her guardian, and she wants her at home."

With no gentle hand Mrs. McGinnis then tore off the finery she had lent to Fanny, but her wrath was directed toward Miss Janet, whom she took for the "aunt." In Fanny's ear she whispered: "If you give them the slip any time for a week, I'll take you back, and risk their finding you if they come again."

Fanny did not utter a word. In the glar-

ing light of the saloon, she looked more child-like than ever.

"Never mind your bonnet, I have brought you a wrap," said Miss Page, and with the officer as a rear-guard they passed out to find Kitty and Baldwin waiting at a little distance.

The whole affair had passed off without much ado, but somewhat later, as Miss Page recalled the look McGinnis had cast on her as she stood on his threshold, she knew that she had made a relentless enemy.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESSIE AND KITTY.

BEFORE one entire year rolled around, Miss Janet Page had come to consider her home as a decided success in every way save in a pecuniary sense. In the first place she believed that she had received as much as she had given. She was as busy, and as happy now as any woman in the whole city; whereas a little more than a year before she had felt no interest in her own life or any life of which she knew. Instead of this old dull indifference, she touched, in these later days, the personality of scores—yes, of hundreds of people. Gradually she had enlarged her accommodations for poor women and girls, until many more now enjoyed the com-

forts of a Christian home, for a sum within their means; a sum that would have been wholly insufficient elsewhere. These women had drawn their associates in here evenings for the enjoyment and profit of rest, recreation, lectures and readings. An Employment Bureau was also proving a great means of good. Miss Page was tireless in spreading the report of it far and wide, among her well-to-do acquaintances, and in one year fifty sewing women, who had made undergarments for the wholesale trade at the rate of five cents each, were helped to places as seamstresses in private families at good wages. In her weekly Temperance Meetings, a work had been done whose value it was not possible to estimate. Her pleasant rooms, the temperance literature, the personal influence, and last but not least, the famous hot coffee, always a specialty there—these combined, had driven away two of the nearest grog-shops. The others flourished, but

many a once familiar face was missing from them, and a corresponding number of names appeared on the pledge roll at the Home. Every Saturday night, more than a few men who came for their supper left with the matron a good portion of their week's wages. By so doing they made sure of having comfortable food in the week to come; and having little money in their pockets, they would be less tempted to visit old haunts of drunkenness.

For little Fanny, the girl whom she rescued from the "Retreat," Miss Janet soon found a situation as nurse girl in a good family outside the city. A similar place was offered Kitty Prior, at the same time, but to Miss Janet's surprise she seemed averse to accepting it, or rather to leaving the city. Louise might have guessed the reason of Kitty's reluctance to go; but about that time the young wife's life was so crowded with new interests and duties that she could not

give to individuals as much thought as of old. She saw Kitty remaining at the Home, and coming regularly to the Club meetings, while Jessie reported her as much more sedate and thoughtful than formerly.

For Jessie McCoy, this first year of a free and better life, had done very much; so much that Louise was often filled with wonder after talking with her. Jessie was just at the age in which a girl developes her heart and intellect most rapidly, when fortunately for her, she found such friends.

"I am convinced," said Miss Page one day to Louise, "that Jessie comes either on the side of her father or mother of an unusually good stock. Do you not see the great difference between Jessie and her step-mother? Mrs. McCoy is rather weak-minded, well enough inclined, to be sure, but at her best only a very ordinary woman, without any ambition beyond the desire for a decent roof over her head."

"While Jessie," added Louise, "is growing every day in intelligence, she shows great good sense, and a sort of simple strength of character that inspires respect."

"I am sometimes tempted," said Miss Janet, "to send her to Mt. Holyoke Seminary and fit her for a teacher; she is capable of doing more than ever Kitty Prior could do in the world."

"Yet she would gladly have gone to the country in the place that Kitty refused; at least I think so."

"Oh, you must be mistaken!" exclaimed Miss Page. "Did she say so?"

"No, but I fancied it," replied Louise, who really could give no reason for her assertion; but a few days after, she happened to be alone with Jessie, and the following conversation took place:

"Have you ever lived in the country, Jessie?"

"Not since I was a little girl."

"What do you remember of it, then?"

"Only little bits, like pictures; but such lovely pictures. Sundays we went down a hill and winding through woods to a little church. Every now and then we could see hill ranges, and below us the moors covered with yellow broom. I was so young I wonder that I can now see how the heather looked on the rocks — see the plastered cottages, thatched on top, and the moss-covered stones in the old kirk yard. One old gray one, marked 'James McCoy, died 1774,' was sunken deep in the sod."

"Still you left Scotland so young, New York must seem home to you."

"I have lived here almost all my life; but I don't like it—the city, I mean. Mother says it is because we have been so poor, but I know that is not it. I can't remember the time when I have not longed for green fields, great trees, plenty of sky over me, and not strips of it between chimneys."

"Your own mother was Scotch, of course, as well as your father?"

"Yes, she was a ship-builder's daughter, near Glasgow. Her father did not like her marrying a very poor man, beneath her, as every one thought, so he did not forgive her for a long time, not until he was near his death. My grandfather was never rich, and he lost about all he had before he died. I never can build any hopes of coming into a fortune from the old country," laughed Jessie.

"It is better for you that you cannot; but have you no relatives over there whose acquaintance you might find pleasant?"

"No—I do not think I have—that is I never think anything about it," replied Jessie: and at that they were interrupted by some one wishing for Mrs. Flemming.

Jessie was sewing in her own room somewhat late in the day, and her thoughts reverted to this question of Louise, in regard to her "relatives," in Scotland. She knew lit-

tle or nothing of them, because on her father's side, there were none, as she remembered to have heard him say. While his children were young, he had brought them to America, and after marrying a second wife, it was not very strange that he seldom or never talked of the family connections of his first wife. Her step-mother, however, might be able to tell something hitherto unknown to Jessie. Thoroughly interested now, the young girl put aside her work and sought Mrs. McCoy. In reply to several questions from Jessie, she answered nothing at first; but sat meditating, with a face almost void of expression.

"It seems to me as if I had heard your father say something or other about some old maid sisters of your mother—how after somebody died (your grandfather, maybe), they went to live, in a poor way, somewhere near—not far from the city. Come to think of it, I believe they were old bachelors—if there were any at all," and concluding this lucid

statement, Mrs. McCoy went on ironing napkins.

Jessie was forced to laugh as she advised her mother to rest for a while, and took her turn at the ironing-table.

Mrs. McCoy was always good-natured, so after a moment, she added:

"There are some old duds of your father's I have always hated to throw away, nothing of the least value; those things you know in the little leather trunk. Among them are old letters. If you should read them, maybe you would find out all you want to know. If there had been any one likely to care about you, I guess your father would have told us before he died."

"That is true," said Jessie; but that same evening, after all her duties for the day were done, she carried the soiled old package of letters to her room and read them carefully. Some were from her mother to her father; these were full of good sense and good principle.

Some were worthless business letters. Several were from women whom she knew must be the "aunts." A certain Margaret McClise wrote after the death of her own father in regard to some household stuff he had wished Jessie's mother to have. This letter was dated from Greenock, on a day of May twenty years previous to this year, in which Jessie's fair face was bent over its pages so intently. Another, and a kindlier letter, or so it seemed to Jessie, was from Elizabeth McClise, who spoke in it of her own fortieth birth-day. "That would make her sixty now, if she is living," commented Jessie, adding, soon after, "she asks about the bairns. I wonder why she never has written to learn of Harry or of me, if she is alive yet? But perhaps these are not all the letters father received."

Nothing more was to be found after another search, except a few Scotch addresses in an old note-book. In this was repeated

Elizabeth McClise's name, and the date of entry was a number of years later.

"I believe," said Jessie, to herself, as she staid awake thinking that night, "that I will write a letter to Greenock in care of the Presbyterian minister there. My mother's people were all Scotch Presbyterians, and if any of the McClise's are living there, the minister would know them—at least I should think he might. I will tell who I am, and that I would like to know more of my relatives. I will copy this letter, or parts of it, and return to my aunt Elizabeth, if she is living."

True to her resolution, Jessie employed her first leisure hours in writing a letter to Scotland. It was a pleasant, modest epistle, in which she told all that it might interest her friends to know; only two points she touched on lightly. Harry's death, and the property of the family. She had no heart to expose her poor brother's folly, and an in-

stinct either of refinement or true independence restrained her from seeming in any possible way to be seeking her relatives' acquaintance for purely selfish motives. In fact, there was every reason to suppose that her aunts, if living, were poor old spinsters, subsisting on a mere pittance.

For two months after her letter went, Jessie awaited an answer with considerable curiosity and impatience, but no answer came. When much more time elapsed, she let all thought of the matter drop from her mind. Indeed, after her letter had been sent, her stepmother one day said that she dimly remembered hearing her husband say that his first wife's relatives had all gone to Edinboro' to live. So that matter ended.

The relations between Jessie McCoy and Kitty Prior continued perfectly friendly, but one young girl seemed to have very little influence over the other. Jessie grew constantly more self-reliant. She studied ways

to do her work to the best advantage, and her amusements were more and more beyond Kitty. Kitty liked well enough to hear Mrs. Flemming read some story, written by Mrs. Prentice, for instance, but only under compulsion would Kitty have read, as Jessie read daily, and by herself, a student's History of England. It seemed to her the height of absurdity that Jessie began to put by a trifle in a Savings Bank, from time to time, and dressed in the plainest sort of way. If she, Kitty, had a half dollar to spare, it quickly went for a pink ribbon, or a locket, with a glass "diamond."

Jessie, on her part, was sure that Kitty's friends were not helpful to her, for she was discontented when not excited by something in the way of "fun," a concert, a Sunday excursion, or an evening at some third rate theatre.

One afternoon, as she was returning from work, for she had found another place in a

shop, Kitty met Mrs. Flemming in the hall of the Home, and stopped to talk with her. She pulled off her old cotton gloves, as they stood side by side, and Louise caught the glitter of what seemed a tiny diamond on Kitty's hand.

With a playful smile and a manner the girl could not resent, the lady took her hand, on which were four rings, and held it a moment in the light. Glancing at three gaudy circles set with yellow and purple ornaments, Louise said :

"One little plain gold ring was all I wore until I was married."

Kitty colored, well understanding her meaning, and was about to draw away her hand, when Louise touched the fourth ring, a slender hoop in which was set a star of small pearls with one smaller, but very brillian diamond in the centre.

"Where did you get that ring?" she asked; and while Kitty hesitated, she added: "I would not ask where you found these worth-

less rings. I do not care to know, and perhaps it might be no concern of mine; but you are not able to buy, or to wear a ring of this sort, Kitty, and no one ought to give or lend you one like it. No really good friend would let you wear it."

"I know—I will take it off—" stammered Kitty. "It belongs to a friend who was rich once, I guess. I teased to keep it a little while—he—she said I must not be wearing it. I shall give it right back."

Louise let go the little hand, roughened by the cold, and searching the girl's beautiful face, said:

"Oh, I am afraid for you, Kitty. Are you not going in slippery places?"

"I try very hard to remember everything good," replied Kitty, hastening away, as some one approached to speak with Mrs. Flemming.

When in her own room she turned the ring around on her finger, curiously looking at it

in the gas light, and murmuring to herself: "He said it was valuable, and I must not show it; but I did not think it was fine enough to excite attention. I don't believe it belonged to his mother. I wish I knew that he told me the truth, half the time, at least. I do know, he cannot have any regular way of earning money. How does he get it? He is not a thief—I know he can't be. I would marry him if I were not so afraid—but I don't know why I fear him. He would treat me well. O dear!"

There was a tap at her door, and Don gave her a note, which some one had left at the door for her a moment before. She read it—just a line without a signature, and said:

"All right, Don."

When he went away, she put on her hat and shawl, turned off the gas and went out again, without waiting as usual to get her supper. She walked rapidly down the street to a certain point where, as she expected, she

met "Tom." A little pettishly she asked what he wanted.

"I want you, now and here, to make up your mind once for all," he replied, coolly. "If you will marry me, I will take care of you, and wherever I live you will live, and fare better than you ever fared in your life; having enough to eat, drink and wear, without hard work. If you wont marry me this very evening, I shall leave you forever. I am going soon to Texas, and you can stay in a shop until you are old and homely; you can get sick, and die in the hospital, and be sent to the potter's field. When it is too late, you will wish you had gone with me."

Kitty leaned against the near brick wall, trembling with excitement.

"To-night!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, now. I want to leave the city for certain reasons this very night. You must not go back to that Home. You may get all the shop girls you know, to witness

your marriage. I know a place where it will be done all up in order."

"Not go back at all?" gasped Kitty.

"No; and remember, you have kept me fooling away my time now for a year. That is all over; it is now or never."

When Kitty began to sob and declare she must go back, for everybody had been so kind to her, Tom mingled just enough persuasion with his stubbornness to bewilder her judgment and increase her distress.

"Come! Come! you can't stand here crying," he exclaimed, finally. "Walk on, while we talk it over."

Out on the Avenue, she had to calm herself—and every step took her farther from home. The next morning Jessie was greatly alarmed to find that Kitty's room had not been occupied, and inquiry showed she had not returned after going out about half-past six the evening before. Day after day passed, and not a trace of the missing girl

could be found. The police were informed, and their services demanded, but they declared the case only too common. They said the girl had run away because she wanted to go, and for that reason she would not be found. Everybody in the Home grieved. Kitty had no enemies, and Miss Page never passed the door of her room without a sigh for the poor foolish child, so pretty and so weak.

One day, about three weeks after her disappearance, a card was received from Kitty, a soiled postal, which evidently had come from a long distance. It was addressed to Mrs. Flemming. The post mark was illegible, but the contents were to the effect that Kitty Prior had been married to James Hazard, on the evening of Nov. 7th, by a certain minister, whose address was given.

Miss Page found this announcement to be true; a German minister attached to a down town Mission had the record of the marriage,

performed the evening of Kitty's flight. He could tell but little of "James Hazard," but pronounced him a "goot"-looking person. Miss Page read him a severe lecture for marrying persons of whom he knew nothing; he meekly asserted that they brought friends with them, who declared it all right for the parties to marry.

"Poor Kitty, I fear she will see trouble," mused the old lady; "but I am glad she sent us the postal card; it shows she cares for us, and for our good opinion."

* * * * * * *

It was the last night of the old year—and in Miss Janet Page's own beautiful home she sat with Mr. Flemming and Louise, by the glowing fire in the library. She had been silent a long time, but the young people had not noticed the fact. Naturally they had much to say to one another, and many bright hopes of the future of their newly united lives. Presently Miss Page spoke:

"I wish I did not have to refuse so many sad-faced, tired women, who want to get rooms in our Home. There were three yesterday who have been paying two-thirds of their weekly earnings for a fireless shelter —just a shelter, no comfort at all."

But you did not start with the one idea of a woman's lodging-house, did you?" asked Mr. Flemming.

In her old quick way Miss Janet replied:

"No, and I don't mean to end with that; but I see it is one way of doing good in a simple, direct fashion. That Home has been a sort of an experiment. I did not want it started in any fixed unchangeable manner, as a regular institution with a board of directors, and no end of machinery."

"Why, I call Herbert and you and myself a 'board of the finest sort,'" laughed Louise.

"Well, yes; for among us we can provide common sense and money. We do not quarrel, and we are not paraded before the

public. But as I was going to say, I wish that some things were different; our audience room is not big enough for the people who come to the prayer-meetings Sunday nights."

"We cannot build any addition in the rear, for we have taken every available inch of ground there already," said Mr. Flemming.

"You might buy that old rattletrap of a tenement house next door," said Louise.

She spoke in jest, and was surprised to hear Miss Page answer:

"That is exactly what I have been thinking. It looks like a very old and insecure building, but it is not much older than my house. I will have Baldwin go all over it and find out everything; then if you think, Mr. Flemming, that we could with advantage add it to this Home of ours we will do it, even if it costs more to repair it than we spent to put the first building in its present shape; and doubtless it may cost more. I wish you would look into the matter next week, Mr.

Flemming. Find out who owns it, and for what it could be bought."

A plan of this sort of course gave rise to a long discussion of ways and means. Mr. Flemming, who remembered in detail the amounts expended already in work of this nature on the Home, made some calculations in regard to the new scheme. When he told Miss Page what he thought would be the probable cost of her proposed undertaking, Louise opened wide her eyes in surprise. Mrss Janet studied the red-hot coals a while, and then smilingly said: "We can afford it." (She never said *I*, of late, but she made Mr. Flemming feel that the knowledge and the Christian enthusiasm he put into the work equalled any money she could contribute.) "There was a time when this would have seemed a larger sum to me than it now seems."

The remarks her words called out from her companions were unheard, for just then Miss

Janet vividly recalled that morning when she crossed the street to speak to the McCoys. How old and forsaken, how bitter and indifferent to life she was; nothing was dear to her, but a tumble-down empty house and her full purse. She had spent a small fortune in the months since, and to-night she was richer and far happier.

"It is so late, let us watch out the old year," exclaimed Louise, after a while; and Miss Janet, arousing herself, turned to Mr. Flemming, saying: "Yes, and let the New Year find us praying! The old one has been good, may the new be even better."

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW NEIGHBORS.

MR. FLEMMING and Baldwin went jointly to making inquiries and personal observations in regard to the old house next door to the Home. Inasmuch as it proved to be the property of a sharp and rather tricky old man, Mr. Flemming did not think it best to seem over anxious about purchasing it; for many people, in dealing with Miss Page or her agents, seemed to think it feasible to ask her exorbitant prices. She was by a part of the community considered a rich lunatic, whom to cheat was clear gain. Moreover, while the site of this house made its purchase desirable to Miss Page, the building itself was in a wretched condition;

thousands must be spent on it if it were to be adapted to her purposes. All objections for and against buying it were duly considered, and a good price was finally offered the owner. The offer was made through a business man, a good friend of Miss Page, who constantly assured her: "I must buy it and turn it over to you; once let old Wilkes know that you want it for your benevolent work, and he will fix his price at double the old shell's value."

Now this was doubtless true; and but for one thing, Miss Page could have come into possession of the property at a reasonable price.

In some unaccountable way, McGinnis found out what was on foot. From the outset, Miss Page and her temperance hobby had caused him intense disgust. He considered her an interloper, and her Home a nuisance. He had started his concert saloon in opposition, and to his great delight it had

proved a success; but then Miss Page's Home was proving a success too, though of quite a different sort. Now to learn that she meant to enlarge her borders, fired McGinnis with rage, and he resolved to do his worst to thwart her.

One afternoon, about a month after Mr. Wilkes had been offered by Miss Page's agent the price she was willing to give for his house, a young man called at the Home. He asked to see Miss Page, and was led to her office, where she happened to be alone. He had a pleasant, manly face, a prepossessing manner, and introduced himself as James Robertson. He said that he had been about six months in the city, and that he was an Englishman, who had come to the States on business. A few weeks before he had attended a temperance lecture here, and as he himself had been greatly interested in Mission work in his own country, he had been attracted to this place. Then, somewhat

abruptly, he asked Miss Page if she were not thinking of buying Mr. Wilkes' old house next door.

Put on her guard at once, she was for a moment silent; she could not tell an untruth, and it might be unwise to tell anything.

"I think," he continued respectfully, "that some one is trying to buy it for you. I am, just now, having business myself with Mr. Wilkes; but he does not know yet who wants his house, or for what use it is wanted. I happen to have found out, and I suppose when I add, that if you wish the house you must secure it at once, you will suspect me of acting in his interest."

"It looks like that, certainly," returned Miss Page, with considerable dignity.

"It does indeed; so I will tell you why I have come to you, and you can take means immediately to find if I am acting a double part. Mr. Wilkes has meant to accept the price offered him, for he knows it is good—

very good for a house in great need of repair. If he thought he could get more, he would demand more. Yesterday, in crossing the Roosevelt Ferry, I overheard a conversation between two rumsellers; one was a certain McGinnis, a neighbor of yours. He told his companion that you were going to start another enterprise like this one, now in operation here, if you could get the house next to yours; but that he would 'spike your guns.' He had been to Wilkes, had found out that Wilkes does not know of you, and he has offered him six hundred dollars more than you offer, if he will give him immediate possession. Perhaps it is too late for you to get it anyway; and if not, you would have to give much more than the actual value of the property."

"Why have you come to tell me this?" asked Miss Janet, after a little pause of surprise and useless reflection.

"Because, McGinnis, by carrying out his

plans, can give you so much trouble, that I thought you might even now overbid him, and take the old house."

"What will McGinnis do?"

"He will let the place to a partner, who means to start a dance hall, and a saloon, of course. McGinnis has money, with influence of the worst kind, and he intends to give you a set of neighbors that you will find anything but agreeable."

Miss Page could not collect her thoughts enough to decide whether the pleasant-faced man could be acting in her interest, or not. Possibly he was sent in this plausible way that Wilkes, or McGinnis and Wilkes, acting together, might extort a larger sum from her. She thanked him rather coolly, but politely; and he took his departure.

As soon as possible, Mr. Flemming endeavored to find out what this information was worth, and to his intense chagrin, he found that Wilkes had already sold out all

right and title to the property. The ink was scarcely dry on the papers; but McGinnis was the owner. He had been very prompt, and too sharp for even a sharper like Wilkes. When the latter learned that by holding on he might possibly have gotten a few dollars more out of Miss Page's pocket, because of her desire to help others from the snares of the rumseller, great was his vexation and terrible his profanity.

When Miss Page heard Mr. Flemming's report, she was for the first time since he had known her, completely discouraged. In fact she burst into tears.

"Why, my dear woman," he exclaimed, "don't take it so to heart. You must remember that one rumseller is not stronger than the power that is pledged to care for you. You believe that He directs your steps when you acknowledge Him in all your ways, and if this is true, He did not mean you to own this house that McGinnis has bought."

"Well, if I can think of it in that light, I shall be reconciled; but when I remember how much trouble McGinnis has been able to make me when he has had his saloon a block distant, I cannot help imagining his power for annoyance if he has another at our very door."

"'Fret not thyself because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass,'" said Mr. Flemming, "and do not forget that the Lord promises to deliver from the wicked those who trust in him;" then seeing Miss Page's face getting brighter, he added: "I am repeating to you the comfort I had to apply to myself on my way home; for I was sorely disappointed."

"That young man who came to warn me was then disinterested. I am glad to know it, for I disliked to think that a person with such an open face could be trying to trick me."

"Yes, I saw him this morning. Wilkes

is a lawyer, and this young Robertson has business to settle for other parties with him. The young man talked with me some time about the work here, and I have an idea that he would make an excellent teacher for the class of wild boys which we have had such trouble to hold for a few Sundays. I asked him to come and try his hand with them next Sunday."

"That is good," said Miss Janet; "and I will stop worrying over McGinnis and go right on doing my best. It is the Lord's work, and He cares more for it than any one of us can possibly care."

Mr. Robertson came promptly, and adapted himself to the untamed boys in a way that won their attention. He was a fine singer, a good story-teller, an earnest, intelligent Christian. In the next few months Miss Page often said that McGinnis had sent them a rare helper.

McGinnis's own movements were of course

now watched with much anxiety. He lost no time. Baldwin had every day a story to tell of the remarkable "repairs" the old house was undergoing.

"Now you know, Miss Page," he exclaimed, "if we'd bought that place we were calculatin' to strengthen the beams, put in new material, and have the hull thing genuine. It aint going to be that now, I can tell you. McGinnis aint spending a cent that don't show. The place for drinking and dancing is being decked out in gaudy cheap ways, and he is telling how much money he is going to put in. A foreign fellow is going to run it, and what do you think, Miss Page? They are going to make seats and tables for outdoors and summers, so that the front and back yards close by us here will be full of drinking, carousing men and women. I heard 'em telling about trees in tubs and Chinese lanterns, and a band of music."

"Yes, Baldwin, I was terribly disturbed at

first, but after all such alarm is very inconsistent with our professions. If we built this Home to be a centre of good work, and good influences, we ought to consider that the nearer the poor wretches come to us the better it may be for them."

"Exactly so—only I was thinking the nearer we got to them the worse for us."

"That depends. Our work is utterly useless unless the power of God makes it vital. Light will overcome darkness if the light is from heaven."

This was Miss Page's reply then, and later, but soon she had need of all her faith. Every week for a long time the temperance meetings had been full. There was a very large class of half-grown boys and young men, who as yet had not become intemperate. They would have just about as readily amused themselves in McGinnis's old Retreat, if he would have allowed any mere hangers-on in his saloon. He would not do this; so because

there was a warm, bright room in the Home they crowded in there. Now all was changed. The audience fell off from the temperance lectures as soon as the dance hall opened. McGinnis's partner allowed great liberty and license; his admission fees were very low. However, all the boys who could not afford to enter the place itself were permitted to crowd into the front yard. The policemen in that part of the city were Irish Catholics, who knew the value of McGinnis's friendship in his political influence. Any help required by inmates of the Home from these guardians of the peace was not refused, but it was seldom of any efficiency. When the uproar about the premises became almost unendurable, the police were sure to be actively engaged elsewhere. It was unsafe for the poor lodgers in the Home to pass through the street after nightfall.

One Sunday afternoon there had been a scene of great disorder in the rear yard of

the dance hall. A band of street musicians had played loud horns under the windows of Miss Page's Sunday-school room, and the few children present were excited and scarcely to be controlled. Mr. Robertson alone was able to keep the attention of his boys; but when the time for the session was ended he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, saying to Miss Page, with a smile: "I am as tired physically as if I had done a hard day's work. It tries one's spirit really, mentally and bodily, to teach against such odds."

Miss Page was about to reply, when some one called her away.

"Your aunt is a very patient woman, or she would give up this undertaking," he added, turning to Jessie McCoy, who had been teaching a class of little girls.

"O, Miss Page, you mean; she is not my aunt," interrupted Jessie, hastily.

"I beg your pardon. I thought you were Mrs. Flemming's sister," said Mr. Robertson.

He had never before spoken to Jessie, but he had noticed her frequently, and if the truth were told, he had been wishing for a chance to speak to her. It is possible for a young man to be very much interested in his own class of boys, to hold their attention all the time, and yet that same young man may be not blind or deaf in regard to his surroundings. Several weeks before this particular day, Mr. James Robertson had discovered that Jessie McCoy had a pretty face, a girlish grace, "bonny brown hair," and that her voice was low and sweet when she talked with her scholars.

After his last remark Jessie hesitated, being a little pleased and flattered; then her native truthfulness and good sense prompted her to add a statement which did not produce just the effect she may have expected.

"I am not any relation to Miss Page; she is a wealthy lady. My mother helps the matron here, and I have a variety of duties

under her. Miss Page helps a great many poor people in such ways to earn their living."

"Brave little woman. That speech cost your pride something, it may be," thought the young man, who found pleasure in watching the color come and go in Jessie's face, and the rings of soft hair over her forehead.

"Yes, it is a grand thing to be a helper in the world, as Miss Page is," he went on. "You speak of her wealth. She uses that, but it is the grace of God that moves her—not her money. I am glad, for if I do anything for my Master, it must be out of comparative poverty; if I had to be rich before I could serve him, I should have to wait perhaps forever."

A little more at her ease, Jessie said:

"Mrs. Flemming is Miss Page's cousin. I think you must have seen her here often."

Mr. Robertson found it a fine time to make inquiries about the management of the Home, and about various meetings he had

never attended, until Jessie, who was really very shy, began to wish he would leave her; although he was always courteous.

After that, whenever Mr. Robertson wanted information on any subject connected with the work going on there, he was quite likely to ask it of Jessie. It made no difference that she usually referred him to Miss Page, or to Mr. Flemming; he returned on the very next occasion to talk the matter over with her. It was all done so simply, however, so very naturally, that no one remarked it, and Jessie was almost annoyed at herself for being so self-conscious as to notice the fact. She was glad all the same to hear Mr. Flemming say that he had satisfied himself that James Robertson was a "thoroughly good fellow."

Jessie's time and attention were soon all absorbed by the severe illness of Mrs. McCoy. Care, work, and privation in past years, had undermined her step-mother's con-

stitution. A severe cold settled on her lungs about this time, and the house doctor pronounced it a case of quick consumption.

Mrs. McCoy had been a kind, faithful friend to Jessie, and when one considers that she was not a woman of great force of character, it was the more commendable that she had in the past, shielded the young girl from the worst accompaniments of poverty in every way possible. Now Jessie repaid her care to the extent of her ability. She took double duties on herself, and removed all care from her mother. The latter was made as comfortable as the finest lady could have been in a warm, cosey little room, where Jessie nursed her and brought to her dainties to tempt her appetite, or sat with her, beguiling the tedious hours with accounts of affairs about the house. These days of enforced idleness, and time for thought, were of great spiritual benefit to each one of this little family. Mrs. McCoy had, as she express-

ed it, "always meant to do as near right as she could," but now seeing death coming, she began to long for a better assurance than this that she had laid hold on eternal life. She was very humble and teachable, so when it came to be a habit with Miss Page or Louise to stop each day for a little while with the invalid, who listened eagerly to their reading of the Bible, or to a prayer for comfort, Jessie, who had not before this time openly confessed herself a Christian, now listened and learned with her step-mother; while little Don, who was often present, never forgot those prayers and Scripture lessons. Mrs. McCoy suffered little pain, and slipped away so gradually, Jessie could not realize that she was going.

One bright lovely afternoon, about the last of winter, Mr. Flemming had visited the sick woman and read to her the words of Peter concerning Jesus Christ: "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though

now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

"Is it not true of you that you love and trust this Jesus the Saviour?" asked Mr. Flemming, closing the Bible, and speaking directly to the poor woman, who sat propped by pillows in an easy-chair.

"Yes, thank God! His goodness to me is what seems most unspeakable."

"Then," said Mr. Flemming, with emotion, "though as a man or a priest I have no power to absolve you from your sins; yet as a brother Christian and another redeemed sinner, I can say that you will receive "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul."

A flood of light seemed playing over the worn features of the plain little woman, while they talked of heavenly things; then she asked him sometime to thank Miss Page and Louise for their kindness. "They will not let me tell it out fully to them, they are too modest; but God knows that I cannot tell

what I owe to them. I am only one poor, ignorant working woman whom they have helped here on earth, but all through eternity, I shall remember that through their help I learned my way to the Saviour."

A few moments after Jessie entered the room, and soon Mr. Flemming went away. Jessie found her mother unusually animated, and desirous of talking.

"Jessie," she said, quite cheerily, "you have been a good girl, and I love and trust you. Now when I am gone I want you to be a mother to my little Don. I give him to you to bring up, and I beg you not to turn him over to strangers, no matter how kind they are."

"Mother, I will cling to Don as long as any sister can cling to a brother; and I will try to be his mother as well as I can," said Jessie, her eyes overflowing with tears.

"There, dear child, don't cry. I am going away from care and work and trouble. I have

had so much of both in the past that I have lost my love of living. You have always made my life brighter, Jessie, and you are naturally stronger than I am, and you know more than I ever knew. I feel safe in trusting you to God's care, and He will help you to care for Don. Now you go down-stairs and attend to your work. Send Don to stay with me, and when you come back at seven, you can bring my tea. I don't want it before that time."

Jessie wiped her eyes, arranged her mother's bed and helped her back there, drew close to it the stand where her cough-drops and cold water were, put by them an orange, and then lingered a moment. She could see nothing more to do, but her heart was full of tenderness toward the feeble woman. She bent over and kissed her, saying: "I will come back as soon as I can."

"Yes, don't hurry! You have always been good help to me, Jessie."

Half an hour later, when Jessie returned with the tea and toast, she found the light turned low, and Don quietly curled up watching in the easy chair.

"She is asleep," he said. "She had a long, hard coughing spell, then she grew easy and said she would rest awhile."

Jessie went near the bed—the pale face had never looked so white; the thin hands were crossed peacefully. Don's mother was indeed asleep, at rest and blessed forever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HAPPY HOME.

MISS JANET PAGE sat alone in her private office at the Home, and perhaps never in the two years since she had launched out in her charitable work had she been so cast down. No great calamity had overtaken her. It is possible that she might have stood boldly under one or more great disasters; but—McGinnis! The dance hall! The saloon on the corner! The ingenuity with which that man tormented her was simply fiendish. He did nothing that could bring him within the clutches of the law. He affected to treat "the old maid and her asylum," as a huge joke, but he inspired every

rowdy in the ward with a sentiment of hostility toward her and her work.

The outside walls of the Home were constantly bedaubed with ink, tar and rotten vegetables; no windows could be kept open with safety or comfort. The noise by night was intolerable. The profanity, the indecency and drunkenness at all times were sickening. Thieves insinuated themselves into the rooms of the Home on plausible pretexts, and stole. Unworthy women told pitiable stories, and engaged her rooms, ate the food she trusted them to pay for later, and then rewarded her faith with shameful trickery and malice.

Good was being done. Others could see this, but just now Miss Page could not find any bright side to the picture. She was constantly putting new hope and life into honest hard-working women. Six devout women, formerly city missionaries, were now kept by her for tenement house visitation.

The first excitement in regard to the dance hall over, her temperance lectures and the prayer-meetings had filled up slowly. Nevertheless it seemed to-night, as Miss Page sat discouraged and weary—it seemed too unequal a contest.

Suddenly the thought came to her that she was assuming a burden that the Lord never meant her to carry. She was making herself responsible for the entire success of his own peculiar work—the triumph of good over evil.

A book marked at certain passages laid open on her desk. It was a pretty fashion of Louise Flemming thus to leave something for her cousin's eyes. To-day, perhaps, knowing Miss Page's trouble, she had purposely pencil-lined a poem of Jean Ingelow.

"And in the raising of their prayer to God
They crave His kindness for the world He made,
Till they at last forget that He, not they,
Is the true lover of mankind."

Again Miss Page read:

"I am not bound to make the wrong go right,
But only to discover and to do
With cheerful heart the work that God appoints."

"There—that is a message for me, as truly as if I heard a voice from heaven," exclaimed Miss Page. "Now I will take courage and go on with my part of the business."

Putting on her bonnet and shawl, she started home with a lighter heart than she had carried for many a day. She was, even in these days, when youth was far behind her, a very impulsive woman; and this afternoon, as she was hurrying home, she happened to meet McGinnis face to face. He pretended not to see her; but turning suddenly, she exclaimed, "You cannot torment me any more. 'The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me;' and I have left you to him, McGinnis."

His brutal red face expressed stupid amazement, at first, then he burst into a roar

of laughter and re-entered the "Retreat."

Miss Page went on home with a strange new sense of relief, as if some burden she had been carrying had slipped suddenly to the ground. It was a beautiful day in April, and as Miss Janet walked along, choosing the quietest streets, the late sunshine of the afternoon glorified brick walls, brightening the new green grass in church yards; the sparrows seemed wild with delight at the return of spring, and new hope returned to the tired worker's heart. As she drew near her own house, she quickened her steps, for in that house was a wonderful attraction—the rarest spring blossom, Miss Janet declared it, that had ever gladdened a young mother. Louise's little girl, or "our new baby," as Miss Page called it, was only two months old, but "so beautiful! so knowing!"

"What a blessed thing it was that Louise Norton ever sought me out, and clung to me, a crabbed old maid. God used her to humanize

me, to make me awake to the fact that I was a selfish, cold-hearted creature; and I am so glad her help did not end there. Just suppose now that I had my own home, as it used to be. I think I could not keep up any great amount of cheerfulness. The sight of so much sin and degradation as I have to contemplate, almost every day, the stories of ruined lives that I hear, all of this would darken life to me if, when I turned away from it all, at intervals, I did not find at home a little Paradise of sunshine and love. People insinuate that Louise gets as much as she gives in her life with me; but it is not true. If she were to go out from my doors to-day, she would leave me only my money, with a cold, empty house, no home left full of good fellowship. Why, that little blue-eyed baby of hers is worth all the property I own. Its father would not make an even exchange with me, for all he laughs at my raptures over it."

Miss Page had by this time reached home. Dolly, who had opened the door for her, said: "nothing" had "happened" since she went out at noon, and reported the baby "good as a little angel."

"She always is angelic," returned Miss Janet, entirely oblivious to the fact that little Miss Flemming had cried with the colic two consecutive hours only the night before; but Dolly, who agreed with her, was equally inconsistent.

"They are all in the library," said Dolly; so Miss Janet, giving her the bonnet and shawl, which she removed, turned toward this cosiest room of all the house.

Louise was sitting with her baby asleep in her arms, and her husband was reading. As Miss Janet entered, he was looking off his book to say to Louise: "Here is something you will like—no wonder that Charles Kingsley was more of a man than a parson. The brotherhood of men about which he talked

so much, was really felt by him, and he evoked a like feeling in others. In a letter here he tells how one day he stopped in the street, before a shop-window, to look at a case of humming-birds. He says he was 'gloating over the beauty of these feathered jewels—wondering what was the meaning, the use of it all—thinking of the treasures of unseen beauty created.' Suddenly he turned to see close to him 'a huge brawny coal heaver, gazing also at the birds. He says, 'as I turned, he turned, and our eyes gleamed wondering, smiling sympathy. In that moment we felt ourselves friends, with a delightful sense of understanding one another, before we burst out: 'Isn't that beautiful!' Well, that is."

"I know a parson," said Louise smiling, "who will never be a Canon of Westminster, of Chester, or of any other Cathedral, but he loves beauty so well, that he sees it in crowd-

ed streets, and rough men feel that he is their friend."

"Yes, that parson you speak of, loves beauty, and here is the proof of it," returned Mr. Flemming, dropping his book and kissing Louise, while Miss Page stoutly protested that the only beauty worth mentioning was possessed by her own precious, lovely little namesake;" whereupon the namesake awoke and made a grimace.

"Mrs. Flemming," said Dolly, appearing in the open door; "there is a young woman in the hall who wants to see you. Seems to me I've seen her, but I can't tell where it was. She wouldn't sit down, and she said if you were busy she wouldn't bother you."

Louise arose, put the baby into its father's arms, whence it was instantly taken by its venerable cousin; then she followed Dolly to the hall. A thin, poorly clad girl, was standing there, and in the twilight she did not recognize her.

"Do you remember Kitty Prior, Mrs. Flemming?"

"Of course I do," exclaimed Louise, cordially, "and is this you, Kitty? Come right in this little room, where we can be alone, and tell me where you have been all this long time?"

Dolly had lighted the gas in the room which they entered, and Louise saw that Kitty's pretty face was paler and sadder than ever before. Her dress was clean, but very poor, and with no such little attempts at finery as she formerly displayed. She colored, stammered, and then said, "I came to see if you had any sewing that you wanted done, Miss Lo—Mrs. Flemming. I came here because I hated to ask for you at the Home."

"If you want work, Kitty," said Louise, kindly, "no doubt I can help you to some, and if you want a friend, you can rely on me; only tell me a little more about yourself."

"I ran away and got married," said Kitty, with a glance at the ring on her finger.

Louise, understanding her thoughts, replied kindly, "We know that, for Miss Page talked with the minister who married you. We did not like to lose track of you so suddenly."

"You were always very kind, the best friend I ever had," said Kitty, with more courage, adding, "if you were not so good I should not come to you, when I think how hard you tried to have me not marry."

"Poor child," said Louise, gently, "have you had trouble?"

Great tears filled Kitty's beautiful eyes and rolled down the face that even now was childish in its pretty outlines.

"Such trouble—you can't tell how I have cried—my heart is broken with it all."

"Was your husband unkind, Kitty?"

To Louise's great surprise Kitty exclaimed, after a passionate burst of grief:

"No, he never said or did a real unkind

thing. He loved me just as well as I thought—and he—"

"What could be the matter, then—is he dead?"

"Oh, I don't know," returned Kitty, weeping afresh; but soon restraining herself, she exclaimed: "I will tell you the whole story. You know I never could tell you much about Jim Hazard—that was his real name, though he called himself Tom, and after we were married I did not learn much more about his business. He said it had to do with hardware. Well, right after I ran away, we went to the far West, and hardly stopped until we got to a little out-of-the-way place near Kansas City. There we hired a few rooms, with money Jim said he had been saving, and we staid there all winter. I was just as happy as I could be. He was good and generous, he got me nice clothes, and did not want me to work. When he was home I was so contented I did not need

friends, and when he went off to "look for work," he did not like me to make strange acquaintances. He looked for work all winter, but never seemed to find any. I wondered that he kept so good-natured and never worried, but he spent just as much for everything we needed. Some things puzzled me. He got queer letters and telegrams, that said queer things, or had no sense at all, and he would not tell me what they meant. He did drink, but it took a great deal to affect him, and he never was ugly to me. I suppose he was a bad man," continued Kitty, pathetically; "he never went to any church, he hated to have me look at my Bible; he would have burned it up one day, but I happened to ask him if his mother never read her Bible, and he dropped it as if I had struck him. If he was not what he ought to have been, I loved him. Well, one day, almost four months ago, he came home in a great hurry and said he must start that very after-

noon on a long journey. Where, or for what he was going, he would not tell. He wanted to leave me, and was counting out a lot of money to give me to last until he sent me word where to join him—when I cried and teased him to let me go too. I hung on him, so he gave up, and said if I would not talk to any one about myself or about him while we were gone, I could go. He forbade me to tell his name even. Well, we got to Chicago and staid there together a week. He kept saying he should tell me 'how to take care of myself if anything happened,' and he made me keep untouched a roll of money for hard times. I always wondered how a working man could get so much money ahead, especially when he never seemed to have any work. Some things Don—something I heard once, made me scared for him sometimes.

"One evening we went to a theatre in the street where we were lodging. He was

laughing at the play, when I looked at him —I was all taken up with the performance myself, but when I turned around next time, Jim was not there, and I never have seen him from that day to this," wailed Kitty, again shaken with sobs.

Louise could suggest no comfort on the spur of the moment, for she could form no theory that would account for this man's conduct.

"Do you think he could have meant to desert you?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"He did it—but what made him do it? He loved me. Wouldn't you know after six months, whether or not your husband loved you?" asked Kitty fiercely, and Louise meekly answered: "Yes, I could not be mistaken."

"That night I thought it was a trick; next day I was wondering, wondering. One woman in the house said he had got tired of me and I never would see him again. After-

ward, when I half believed that, I was tempted to go and drown myself."

Unheeding Louise's exclamation of horror, she went on: "I did not believe it. I staid where I was, being very careful of my money, and getting some shop work. I had a notion."

Kitty stopped abruptly in her story, saying: "Will you promise to keep this notion of mine to yourself, if I tell you it?"

After a little reflection, Louise promised, and Kitty went on. "Sometimes I think he was doing wrong; making tools for burglars or mixed up with them in some way, and that the secrets and the messages meant that. Perhaps he espied a detective, or some one he must avoid that night. Maybe he was running away from Kansas, as he had run from New York."

"I think you are on just the right track in this, Kitty."

"I thought so, and I said he must know

where to find me, if he wanted to let me know where he was later. He might have been caught, you know."

"Yes, of course."

"But he never sent me a line or a message, although I staid there nine weeks; then I managed to get on to New York. I can't tell why, but it seems to me he will get here sooner or later. If he ran away from me and does not mean to keep me any longer, he would come here, for he likes New York better than any other city. If he has been arrested, I may learn of it here. I don't want to go back to the Home. I can't see Jessie McCoy and the rest who warned me that I would come to trouble. I must get work to do where I lodge."

Louise talked a long time with the poor little deserted wife. She urged her to return to the Home, but finding that was of no avail, she promised her help and sympathy. When the dinner-bell rang she called Dolly; and

that friendly individual needed only a hint to take Kitty to her cheerful domains and entertain her bountifully. As Louise led Kitty from the room; they met the little party coming from the library. Miss Page recognized Kitty's pretty face at once, and stopped to give her a very kindly greeting, asking no questions. She only displayed the dainty white robed baby, which she still carried in her arms, and she silently wondered at the tears gathering in Kitty's great eyes as she looked at it and glanced back at Mr. Flemming holding open a door so carefully for his wife. Louise did not enter the door, but gently pushing Miss Janet toward it, lingered to say:

"Don't give up courage, Kitty. We will pray every day from this time on, that God will find your husband for you and make you both love Him. God can move the heart of every man He ever made, if the man will only let Him."

"You are so good, Miss—Mrs. Flemming. I ought to have listened to you, but I loved Jim, even if he is not good; but there must be a little good in him, for he loved his mother, though he never would tell me about her—and he did love me."

"I can pray for him all the better," was Louise's reply, as she left her with a warm clasp of her little cold hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONE NIGHT AT THE DANCE HALL.

IT was a warm evening in May, a few weeks after Miss Page's brief interview with McGinnis, and it was well that lady had resolved not to vex her soul any more with the rumseller's "evil devices," for these last were manifold. This night there was to be a "masquerade ball," in the dance hall, and early in the evening the noise and rioting was like Pandemonium. Mr. Flemming, hearing of the proposed revelry, had kept his wife and her cousin from coming to the Home, but he had gone there with Baldwin, fearing their presence might be required.

In the rear yard, tables were set, and the

place crowded with profane drinkers and vile women. Every few moments half-burned cigars, broken goblets and slops of liquor were dashed over the fence into Miss Page's premises.

"It will be a wonder if they do not set fire to us before morning," said Mr. Flemming, making fast the shutters of a window the glass of which had just been shivered. "If they could burn us without burning their own property, our case would be hopeless," he added.

"Well, do you know," said Baldwin, who was lending a helping hand, "do you know, Mr. Flemming, I've had some queer notions lately. I aint so sure McGinnis would care if this dance hall did go. When he first bought the place he swelled awfully about the money he was putting into it, but he didn't spend but precious little in genuine repairs. What he did do was to fill it up with showy movable fixin's, and the biggest

stock of rum-casks that ever I see. That was all to be expected. Well, Robertson says to me, one day here, a month or so ago, says he, 'McGinnis has got the biggest insurance on this concern, bigger considerable than he has got on his other den.'"

"I suppose he thinks this place is more likely to burn than the Retreat," said Mr. Flemming. "He lives in the other place, and looks out for it more carefully."

"Maybe; but Robertson says somebody told him there were cart loads of casks there, that weren't filled with liquor, by any means."

"But we know there is rum enough sold there."

"Oh, of course. Well, maybe it is a notion of mine that McGinnis doesn't mean to lose anything if he does burn, but to make a good job of that; but I do know that lately the good movable things he put in, have been taken over to the Retreat; and except

the bar and the conveniences for whiskey-guzzling, precious little is left. The room where the dancing goes on, for instance, is furnished chiefly in pink tissue paper and indecent chromos."

"Then you think McGinnis doesn't care whether the place burns or not."

"I think," said Baldwin, dryly, "that the devil is every bit as black as he is painted."

While they were talking, the matron entered and begged Baldwin to remain in the house all night. "You will think we are very cowardly, but there are so many women of us here, and only one man servant, besides the night watchman," was her statement, made with a voluminous account of the evil deeds of the neighbors.

Baldwin agreed to stay, and Mr. Flemming quieted the matron's fears, assured her that he would remain himself, or better still have a policeman detailed for service, if there seemed any need for unusual precaution.

"I will stay anyway, until after midnight," he added, "for Mrs. Flemming told me I might, if I would have a carriage engaged to bring me home, and not go through the street alone."

At the usual hour, the inmates of the Home retired. Baldwin threw himself on a lounge in the reading room, and fell asleep, while Mr. Flemming took a book, and read undisturbed by the din of a brass band under the window.

About midnight, the uproar out of doors gradually subsided, the street rabble melted away, the drinkers and card-players went home or drank themselves stupid. The dissipation went on within the dance hall. Mr. Flemming arose, put on his hat, turned down the gas, and went to the window to see if the hack he ordered had come.

Suddenly cries of "Fire! Fire!" broke out on the air, and out from the adjacent hall poured a crowd of bawling men and women,

some shrieking with terror, some roaring with drunken laughter.

They rushed into the street and gazed into the upper story of the building, from whose open windows began to swell the puffs of black smoke, and soon waving banners of flame. The fire alarms were sounding, and with their almost miraculous promptness the fire engines came tearing down the street, sending fiery showers through the darkness. More picturesque then than any transformation scene in a theatre was the spectacle that followed, could one have looked at it as a cool outsider sees a play. In an inconceivably short time the dance hall was a mass of flame, from the ground floor to the attic, and the efforts of the fire companies were chiefly directed toward the Home, which was, to all appearances, doomed. From every tenement house near by had issued men, women and children, who filled the street with a mass of noisy humanity, beaten back

by the police, drenched and yelled at by the firemen. McGinnis, apparently beside himself with excitement, was bellowing orders right and left to the motley crew of his adherents. The inmates of the dance hall had been in costume, and now looked grotesque enough in the lurid light which flared on the painted faces, the vulgar finery of haggard women, of girls young in nothing but years.

The Home caught fire first on the roof, and that burned rapidly. The matron was calm in real danger as she had been timid in anticipation. With prompt obedience she carried out Mr. Flemming's orders, and with Baldwin's help everything that could be done was done at once. The lodgers were roused, time given them to collect their humble possessions, and then they were helped through the crowd to a shelter elsewhere.

When the roof of the dance house fell in with a crash, and a terrible rain of fire, the upper part of the Home was all in flames; but

a fireman assured Baldwin they would save it yet. About this time McGinnis was attacked with a perfect fury of what seemed disinterested energy to help "save" this last named property, and in spite of the police he effected an entrance into the house with several equally zealous followers. They seized articles from the rooms as yet untouched by the fire, and dashed them out of the windows. They helped with a kind of fiendish enthusiasm, until force enough could be raised to hustle them out.

With a horrid leer, and a worse oath, he passed Mr. Flemming, who had helped the police to clear the room. "Never mind," he chuckled; "you've got the boarders all out, and if their diamonds is only insured, let the Bibles burn up along wid me whiskey barrels."

At the door he dodged the policeman, who ejected the rest of the mischief-working party, and darting into the reading-room he

set fire to a file of newpapers on a table covered with other papers. He did it as coolly as he would have lighted his pipe—and the trick was as harmless. In a second, Baldwin dashed past him, tore down the papers, stamped out the kindling flames, exclaiming: "Now, you wretch, I know you fired your own rum-hole, and you'll never get your insurance on it if honest men can hinder."

"McGinnis was a powerful brute, with strength of arm to fell three men like Baldwin. He sprang forward, but Baldwin was more alert; and at that moment firemen rushed through on their way up-stairs. McGinnis hurried to the front door, Baldwin followed the firemen. Twenty minutes more decided the matter. McGinnis's house was destroyed, but the Home was saved. True, the fourth story was burned and the third smoked, drenched with water, and unfit for use, but time and money would make all as it had been formerly.

About this time Mr. Flemming and Baldwin met in the lower hall, and the former said, "The worst is past, I think. I have been trying to get word to my wife that I cannot come home, but she must not be alarmed. I doubt if she gets any message at all."

"Maybe it is as well. If they knew what was going on you could not keep Miss Page at home."

"What is that woman screaming?" asked Mr. Flemming, with momentary curiosity.

"That," said Baldwin, sarcastically, is Mrs. McGinnis. She is raving over their impending poverty and the thousands gone to smoke. It is heart-rending to hear her tell of the 'illigint' furniture which she says has been burned up in the 'hotel' part of this hall."

"Stand guard here, Baldwin, while the firemen want the door open. Meanwhile I will—"

Mr. Flemming never finished the sentence. Mrs. McGinnis, who stood only a few rods

from the door, had become unguarded in her wild talk. She was showing out her spite that the "old maid's lodging house was a standin', whin by all rights it should be ashes now. Bad luck to her stingy soul and her stuffed money bags—spoilin' our trade—and—"

McGinnis heard her begin to quote a speech of his that might not serve him well if repeated. Swearing loudly, he hurried toward her, his hand outstretched to clutch her roughly, for in the din and confusion, not even his mighty voice could overpower her shrill one.

Just then a heavy wooden cornice, all on fire, fell from Miss Page's roof. It flashed flaming through the night, like a thunderbolt; and before the crowd could do more than fall back, one man on the other—it smote McGinnis to the earth and buried him in red hot coals. The people, stupefied with horror, did nothing for a second but groan;

then two firemen dashed forward, others turned the hose that way, and at last (very soon, indeed, but it seemed an endless time) McGinnis was drawn out, crushed, horribly burned, a smoking mass, drenched with water. Mrs. McGinnis would have torn him from the men in convulsive fury, but restraining her as they could, the firemen, at Mr. Flemming's entreaty, bore him into the hall of the Home. He was not dead, but so terribly burned and mangled that his agony was enough to sicken the stoutest heart.

As soon as anything could be done in the utter confusion that reigned everywhere, the police summoned an ambulance, but McGinnis prayed, begged and plead to be let alone till "a priest—a priest," could come; and Mrs. McGinnis fought off help from him, bellowing like some mad animal. Mr. Flemming and Baldwin, with oil and every remedy they could lay hands on, tried to give the man momentary alleviation of his agony, while

one messenger ran for a priest and others for doctors. Before either priest or physician could get there, McGinnis was mad with pain. One moment he declared he should be in "hell," by morning. The next moment he implored them to keep him alive until the priest could save him from hell. Soon he began to call for "a drink! a drink!"

"Wait until a doctor gets here," begged Mr. Flemming. "How do you know but liquor will make him worse off than he is?"

But liquor was a panacea for all troubles with McGinnis's friends, and liquor they now poured down him. Suddenly there was a slight stir at the door, and Mr. Flemming, glancing up, saw Miss Page come hastily into the room and stop, horror stricken, at the sight of the poor suffering wretch, whom she did not at once recognize. McGinnis, however, saw her, and in the half-crazed brain of the tortured body, awoke a wild idea.

"She did it!" he shrieked. "She put a

curse on me one night! She left me to God, and she fixed the curse on me! She said I don't fear ye, McGinnis!"—Then with mingled oaths and prayers, he implored them to send again for another priest.

A doctor arrived first, but even while he was doing what he could for the poor wretch, McGinnis's cries changed to groans, his groans to gasps, and when a priest at last came, he found him unable to speak, his huge frame quivering with anguish. The mummery of "preparing," him for death was scarcely began, before life fled, and there, in the house that he had planned to burn, lay the unsightly corpse of the rumseller, who had vowed to rid the neighborhood of Miss Janet Page.

Since entering the room, Miss Page had seemed to herself to be in some dreadful dream. The scene before her was as unreal as the scene just over the threshold, where, outside, the burning walls were still tum-

bling in over the spot where a few hours before McGinnis's dancers had caroused.

"This is too terrible for you, Cousin Janet," said Mr. Flemming, coming to lead her away from the room; for Mrs. McGinnis, learning of her husband's death, was giving way to her feelings as only such a woman can, and to hear her was harrowing. "All the inmates of both houses were saved, let us be thankful for that; and may God save their souls, as he has saved their bodies."

"Oh, I did not curse that poor sinner," moaned Miss Janet. "God knows I pitied him, even while I feared him."

"Well, he will never harm us any more; of course you never wished him evil, but God has dealt with him as he saw fit. How came you here, anyway, and where is Louise? I hope she is not in suspense or distress."

"No, I told her you thought best to stay all night; then I learned from the messenger there was trouble here, and I could not stay

away. Dolly promised not to let her worry. Now tell me how the fire started?"

"Perhaps we will never know how; but there is good reason to suppose that poor wretch in there fired his own house, having insured it for more than it was worth. I would not lay more sins to his account than he was guilty of committing, but Baldwin thinks that he meant this house to go with his own."

But little time could be spent at that hour and place, in talking of the night's events. Although the danger seemed past, no one could be sure of that, and many precautions must be taken. When daylight dawned, the ravages of the fire were plainly visible. The dance hall was entirely demolished. The exterior of Miss Page's house was marred, bricks blackened and glasses broken, while the upper stories, were completely ruined by fire and water. The lower floors were unharmed. Before night the lodgers were all

again installed in comfortable quarters. This was done by economizing space and making some rooms do double duty.

McGinnis's death made a great sensation throughout the entire neighborhood. Among certain classes, he was talked of as a great public character. One hearing the "pot-house politicians" discourse on his career, would have supposed him a patriot, and a statesman. Another class, the poor ignorant wives of drinking men, secretly rejoiced that there was one less rumseller to take the food from their children's mouths.

Mrs. McGinnis, was a bigoted Catholic, and withal superstitious to the last degree. Out of the horror of that dreadful night of the fire she had brought a firm belief in one thing, which inspired her with an intense fear of Miss Janet Page. Her dying husband had declared that Miss Page had cursed him, and that curse had worked his destruction, and the ruin of his dance hall. But

for this, she believed that her husband might be alive, and prosperous; whereas he had died without the offices of the Church, and was now suffering tortures. She fairly raved in her grief and terror, so that Miss Page, learning of it, went herself to the poor creature to assure her that she had never even wished real harm to McGinnis, much less cursed him. But the wife, who knew only too well how her husband had hated Miss Janet, and all her undertakings, and who did not know in the faintest degree the long-suffering patience of the true Christian, could not be convinced that her fears were foolish.

Strange good comes out of strange evil sometimes. Credulous women, and half brutalized men, discussed Miss Page and repeated the story of her interview with McGinnis. Her simple use of Bible language: "'The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me'— and I have left you to him—" these words were repeated, per-

verted, and dwelt upon until the impression began to prevail that here was a woman, and an enterprise not to be meddled with maliciously, if one would escape a mysterious vengeance.

"She never harmed us, and she's better now for a friend than an enemy," whispered more than one ignorant creature to some crony as she passed the door.

Soon after McGinnis's funeral — such a funeral! the carriages blocked the streets each way, and Mrs. McGinnis had her wish, loudly expressed in the excitement of ignorance and grief—that McGinnis "should have a reception the like of which her neighbors had never seen." After it she announced her intention of selling out the business and going to live with her sisters in Cincinnati.

In a few weeks Mr. Robertson informed Miss Page that in all probability, she could yet purchase the lot next her own. He had heard that the insurance companies refused

to pay anything like the sum demanded of them, for if it could not be proved that the dance hall was set on fire, there was abundant evidence that McGinnis had over-insured the building and its reputed contents. Living he might have fought for his claims; dead it was easy to prove him a cheat. Mrs. McGinnis, firm in the faith that the place had been looked upon by Miss Page's "evil eye," would probably sell the lot for a fair price.

"I do not doubt," said Mr. Flemming, one day, "that by the time we have rebuilt that part of your house destroyed by fire, and put all again in order, that we can go directly at work to build on the next lot, just as commodious a dwelling as your heart desires, or your purse admits."

"I suppose some other rumseller will buy the Retreat," said Miss Page, reflectively.

"Without a doubt, but we will hope he may not have McGinnis's influence. Our

line of procedure must be just the same, to act on the principle that the only way to regenerate the world, is to do the duty which lies nearest us," returned Mr. Flemming. "It would be a fine thing to pronounce (as poor Mrs. McGinnis fancied you did) a Biblical curse on every rum-hole in this city, and then see a fire sweep through to consume every drop of intoxicating liquor; but that is not a practical crusade for us to set on foot. We must just go on quietly, helping men and women, soul and body, as we can catch them. If the brawling sot is just made pure by the blood of Christ, he will become peaceable by natural consequence. Our prayer-meetings, our hot coffee, our temperance lectures, our employment bureau, our cheap rooms and free literature, are only traps to catch sinners. When we have caught them, only the Great Physician can cure them. In a work like ours, no one stupendous result is ever achieved; it is simply sowing beside all waters—do-

ing what our hands find to do, and leaving the rest to the Lord."

"Yes, and I am glad every day of my life, that we are doing it all with no fuss or parade. Our chief workers work from love; our domestics are faithful, and we pay them well; but we make no paupers, we ask no public adulation, and we need no outside funds. For this last fact, I thank God. How good He has been to me. I often wonder that He did not take all my money away from me in those long years I was hoarding it for naught."

"You are spending it lavishly enough now."

"I am growing old," returned Miss Page thoughtfully.

"Nonsense, Cousin Janet; you are barely past middle life."

"Thank you for your gallantry," she said, smiling; then shutting down the lid of her desk, she continued, "I have been thinking

of some business matters very seriously of late. I am not old, it is true, but I am on the down-hill side of life, and all my family died young. I came of a short-lived stock. This being true, I think it best to arrange my affairs so that in case of my death, matters might go on as I wish. I have other relatives beside Louise. They are worldly, well-to-do people, who have never cared for me, calculating they would get as much or as little of my property after my death, if they wasted no time or trouble on me living. They are right. I shall leave them nothing. Louise loved me when I was a most unlovable mortal. I have always loved her. I shall leave her a sum sufficient to keep her in comfort all her life, and shall put at interest a sum for the baby. The rest of my money I want to leave for temperance work; but I wish it left under the wisest regulations. So long as this Home can go on with success, doing perceptible good in this part of

the city, I want it maintained; and I shall make provisions for any changes or improvements that may seem advisable as time runs on. You have been so wise a counsellor, and so active a worker in the past, that naturally I cling to the thought of sometime leaving you to be the head and manager of the establishment; but this is in a sense selfish. You are fitted for a far more conspicuous position in life; you will be here quite outside the circle where earthly honors are bestowed. I want you therefore, Mr. Flemming, to take a few months to review the situation. At the end of that time, tell me if I may leave you to carry out my plans, and better ones, perhaps, later, of your own; or if you will, remain with me only as the dear friend and relative you are."

Miss Page was not surprised that Mr. Flemming made no reply to this confidence of hers. She knew that he would find it a

subject to be long thought about before he arrived at a conclusion. He had listened with a grave face, and he sat a long time after she ceased, in silent meditation.

CHAPTER XX.

NEWS FROM AFAR.

FROM the day that Mrs. McCoy died, Miss Page had given Jessie reason to know that in her the desolate girl had found a firm friend. In the first place she gave her a more responsible position in the house, making her the assistant of the matron, at a salary sufficient to provide for herself and Don. For Don, Miss Page had always felt a decided affection, and she now looked out for his welfare in various ways. He was going to school regularly and doing himself credit.

"I think, Lousie," said Miss Page to her cousin, as they sat together one day at home —"I think that Jessie McCoy is a remarkable girl."

"She is very attractive and very intelligent too, considering the few advantages she has had," said Louise, who was playing with her small daughter.

"I would have sent her somewhere last year to fit her for a teacher, but I thought she owed a duty to her mother, who was getting feeble and needed her. The other day I had a long friendly talk with Jessie, and it really seems as if the girl had learned as much in the last two years as she could have learned in any school. Of course the information gained is of a more miscellaneous character, but it is of a kind to serve her well through life. She reads the best books she has access to, and digests them."

"It is not too late to fit her for teaching now, if you wish it."

"No. I believe I will ask her if she cares to begin such a career. But there is Don, I never thought of him. Jessie promised to be a mother to him, and never to leave him

to strangers. Perhaps, after all, we had best let well enough alone."

At that moment Dolly appeared to say that the subject of their conversation was in the house, and would like to see Mrs. Flemming a little while, if she were at leisure.

"Let her come right in here," said Miss Page. "She wants to see the baby, she told me so; as for me I must go and write some business letters."

Jessie came as soon as Dolly gave her permission, and for a little while Mrs. Flemming supposed that the motive of her visit was to see the remarkable baby, whose praises Miss Janet sounded, as Louise said, "in season and out."

But when the young mother had displayed all her accomplishments, some of which were purely imaginary, she began to notice that Jessie was very nervous and pre-occupied, that her eyes were very bright, her cheeks very pink.

"She wants to tell me something, and I must make it easy for her," thought her quick-witted hostess, beginning to make the conversation personal. She asked about the books Jessie was reading, of her Sunday-school class, and told her that Mr. Robertson said she was taming some very wild children in that class. By the way, Mr. Robertson talked of returning to England, and her husband was very sorry; he should miss his help.

Glancing at her young visitor, Louise saw such a rush of color flood Jessie's face at the mere mention of this man's name, that she divined something of the truth, and quietly inquired if Jessie had become acquainted with James Robertson.

Then, with much bashfulness and many blushes, Jessie told her story.

James Robertson had for a long time, in a manner as persistent as it was respectful, sought her friendship. Coming to the various meetings at the invitation of Mr. Flemming,

he had ample opportunity to talk with Jessie. These interviews, if brief and public, were frequent. He had until a few weeks previous to this day talked of many matters mutually interesting, but not very personal. He had, however, lately received business letters requesting him to return to England. When he had told Jessie of their contents, he told her also that he loved her, and asked her to marry him.

"Ah, Mr. Flemming will now understand something that has puzzled him," exclaimed Louise, smiling. "He said only yesterday that Mr. Robertson had brought him a great budget of letters from various parties in England, certifying to what no one here had ever doubted; his integrity of character. One was from his pastor, who had known him since boyhood. I see he wanted all of us to be satisfied that you were running no risk.—Do you love him, Jessie?"

"I—I—have refused to marry him."

"Why?"

"He is not very well off, and he is from a family who think considerable of position, and all that, if they are poor. He told me once they wanted him to marry a girl with money. Now, wherever I go I must take Don, and I must look out for him until he can do it for himself. Mr. Robertson insists that he will take Don too, and do for him as he would do for his own brother; but I don't think that best. He must go back to England, and his mother and sisters would tell him we were great burdens on a poor man."

"I don't think you are wise in this," said Louise, promptly. "You are not marrying his family, but James himself; if you love one another, and he is able and anxious to support both Don and you, and he is every way worthy of you, then I think you are acting rather rashly."

"He declared that he was coming to you

and to Mr. Flemming, and that he should make you convince me that I was stubborn; so I came first to tell you my reasons," said Jessie. "I do not want him to present me to a disappointed, disgusted family over there in England, and have them say I was a poor nobody, and made him promise to take care of Don."

"Would you leave Don to Miss Page for a few years? I think she would see that he was provided for."

"Never," exclaimed Jessie, quickly. "I promised his mother not to do anything of that kind. It would be very generous in Miss Page, and just like her to propose it; but it would be shirking my duty, to turn my brother over to her."

"Yes, in so far as it may be a question of duty, I agree with you; and if Mr. Robertson asked you to choose between doing your duty by Don, or marrying, I should say you were right; but have you not made it a mat-

ter of pride, as well as duty, Jessie? He does not ask you to leave Don."

Jessie gave such a decided little shake of her pretty head that Louise laughingly added:

"Who would have thought you such an obstinate little creature? I always supposed you were very yielding."

"No, I am Scotch."

"But, England has been known to subdue Scotland before this."

It was Jessie's turn to laugh; but when she went away a half hour later, she was still obstinate, although she confessed that she loved James Robertson.

Soon after Jessie's interview with Mrs. Flemming, James Robertson, in his turn, sought the advice and help of Miss Page and the Flemmings. They were inclined to think, as he thought, that Jessie was a little proud and over particular, yet they respected her independence of character.

Miss Page, however, said privately to Louise:

"It may be all for the best. If he is every way worthy of a good wife, he can afford to wait a few years. Even if he waited until Jessie should be twenty-four or five, it would be no great thing. By that time, Don will be almost able to take care of himself, while Jessie, if she developes as rapidly as she has developed in the last year, will be fully equal to any position he would be likely to fill in England or America."

"That is exactly what Jessie herself says, when she talks of the matter with me," replied Louise. "But I think when the time really comes for him to sail, she will not be so cool and sensible. I do not want her to have anything to regret, when it is too late to alter her decision."

"Mr. Robertson sails the first day of July, and she has a month to think about it before he goes."

As for Jessie herself, she went about her duties at the Home, as demurely as if nothing more exciting had ever entered her mind; only she grew a little paler and thinner. Her outward conduct was, however, no index of the conflict she was undergoing. Sometimes she was tempted to leave Don with Miss Page. Surely this would not be to leave him to a stranger. He would have more advantages than she herself could obtain for him; but if she did this, she ran away from a duty she had solemnly assumed. Again she wavered between the inclination to marry James, then to take Don with her to England regardless of her husband's family, and a resolve never to subject herself to unfriendly criticism. She grew actually morbid on this last point.

About the middle of June, she experienced something which changed the whole current of her affairs.

It was a lovely morning, and one peculiarly

pleasant at the Home, for the work of repair was progressing with astonishing rapidity, and better still, that day Miss Janet was to come into possession of the lot whereon had stood the dance hall, and where she now proposed to erect another building connected with that one still standing.

Early this day she had come to the Home with Mr. Flemming, and they were busy over many papers and accounts in Miss Page's office.

Jessie was passing through the hall, when the postman came, delivering a much larger mail than usual. Miss Page, on going to her office, had said to Jessie: "I expect some important business letters this morning. Please bring them up as soon as they come."

There they were, to be sure, several bulky epistles; and Jessie, calling out two or three addresses to the lodgers, hastened up-stairs with the rest.

Miss Page received her letters eagerly, and

Jessie was leaving the room, when Mr. Flemming detained her by asking a question. Before she could reply, Miss Page exclaimed:

"Why this big envelope is directed to you, Jessie, and it is a foreign letter."

"A foreign letter!" she repeated, with a confused notion of James Robertson, and the dreaded English relatives. Then blushing at such inconsequent reasoning, she took the letter, and gazed at the stamp and the writing, making no attempt to open it.

"Maybe it is from those Scotch friends to whom you told me you once wrote, but never heard from," suggested Miss Page; then, not wishing to appear curious, the lady turned to talk with Mr. Flemming. Jessie went directly to her own room, opened the letter, and puzzled over its contents for a long time, her face getting very animated, before she looked up to cross her hands and smilingly study the objects in her room, seeing none of them. Then she arose and hurried

down again to the office. Her tap on the door was answered by Miss Page, who said: "Come in;" and Jessie, more excited than they had ever seen her, exclaimed:

"Will Mr. Flemming be kind enough to read all this letter, and tell me if I understand it aright. It is very strange!"

Mr. Flemming took it from her hand, and read it slowly aloud, with frequent comments and explanations.

The sum and substance of the letter was as follows.

The letter which Jessie had written to the minister at Greenock had been handed by him to the person whom he thought most likely to give it due attention. He was himself ill, at the time he received it, and died a few weeks after. The person holding the letter, had kept its reception a secret, for obvious reasons.

When Jessie's mother came to America, she left, or Jessie supposed she left, two sis-

ters behind her, both poor and unmarried. These sisters had lived in Greenock about ten years, in a very plain way for women brought up in comparative affluence, yet they never were poor in the sense the McCoys had been poor. After ten years, certain property almost worthless at their father's death, rose in value, and they came into very comfortable circumstances. They removed to Edinboro', where they lived ever afterwards. They wrote repeatedly to America, asking information about the two children of their sister, after they had learned of the latter's death; but no letter had ever been received, or at least replied to—and Jessie remembered that her step-mother could not recall any. Probably they were lost, as Jessie's father moved almost every year from tenement to tenement. Margaret McClise died five years previous to the date of this letter just at hand. She left her share of the property to Elizabeth, and after her death, two third

cousins of theirs had come to live with Elizabeth, whose health was feeble. One cousin was a woman of middle age; the other, her brother, a younger man, who assumed much responsibility in Miss Elizabeth's business affairs. Two months before that person's death, Jessie's letter was forwarded by the minister at Greenock, and was not shown to her or to any one; for Robert Nelson justly argued that it might change Miss Elizabeth's will in a way not advantageous to himself or to his sister. When Jessie's aunt died, he found, much to his chagrin, that she had left them only one-half her property, exclusive of her house and its belongings. The other half she had left to Jessie and her brother, in case they could be found within the next ten years. The house also was to be Jessie's, with all it contained. If the McCoy children were not found after ten years, all was to go to the Nelsons. Fortunately Miss Elizabeth had appointed worthy and disinterested men

to administer her affairs, although these, unaided by Nelson, had not been able to get any clew to the other heirs.

Nelson knew that the Greenock pastor was dead, and resolved to bide his time, sure of ultimately coming into full possession. It was unfortunate for him, that the wife of the Greenock pastor had been a wide awake curious little body, who had read every word of Jessie's letter and rejoiced in it, as exceedingly interesting. She had even noted down in her diary, Jessie's address, with all the points of her story, before her husband sent off the epistle. Months later, when by chance she learned of Elizabeth McClise's death, she wrote, out of the abundance of her curiosity, asking if the American niece had been sent for, and dwelling on the letter that came from her to her husband.

This letter did not fall into Nelson's hands, but was received by the men whom Miss McClise had wisely chosen to settle her estate.

Now was Jessie McCoy prepared to start for Scotland, to prove her identity, and to take possession of a property not large, but enough to make her no longer dependent on others for the support of herself and her brother. True, little Don was not the brother born years ago in Scotland, but he was Jessie's brother, and she could henceforth do for him, as her warm heart and her not weak judgment dictated.

All this Mr. Flemming made plain as he read, interrupted by frequent exclamations from Miss Janet, whose interest was lively. Jessie sat like one in a dream. She could not sorrow for relatives whom she had never known, she could not but delight in her good fortune.

She was recalled to the present by a remark of Miss Page :

"Now Jessie, you must go to Scotland, and you cannot well go alone and unprotected," exclaimed that lady, with a smile so sug-

gestive, that Jessie was suddenly much confused, but she stammered :

" Don will go with me, of course."

Miss Janet refrained from some remarks which she was tempted to make then and there. Instead they talked over every phase of this new and interesting event in the young girl's life. Both Mr. Flemming and Miss Janet were pleased and impressed by the self-possession and good sense Jessie evinced, while she was unmistakably greatly excited. She showed no silly elation at the mere idea of being " rich," for in comparison with absolute poverty her new property must have seemed riches; but she simply expressed joy at the thought of having a real home of her own. When at last she left Mr. Flemming and Miss Page again alone, she went about her usual duties with the fancies of a child reading a fairy story. Was it possible that she could leave behind her the hard, dull life of her girlhood, and be free to live a life

of ease or luxury? She did not wish that, but one free from care about food and raiment. Was she going to be able to see fields and flowers, when the old longings for nature took hold of her—free to help others, as she had been helped.

Then certain other thoughts came to Jessie. Now she need not fear the sneers of any "family;" now her brother would be independent of any help from any one save his sister. This being the case, what followed?

Well, it followed that when Miss Janet Page started to go home that noon, she stopped in the little linen room where Jessie was counting out clean linen, and sitting beside the young girl, she said: "Shall you marry James Robertson now?"

"What would you advise me to do?"

Miss Janet's eyes twinkled; for Jessie had not asked any advice heretofore, and she knew what the advice given would be like.

"I should say that if you loved him you

had better marry him before the time comes for either of you to leave the country. This opinion of mine is of course based on the conviction that he is a thoroughly worthy man. He won Mr. Flemming's respect long before he had any interest in securing our favor, and he has given every proof that we could ask in regard to his past correct life, and his friends in England."

He certainly liked me when I was as poor as poor could be, and now it makes no difference with Don; so perhaps—"

"Perhaps some of these lovely June days we will have a quiet little wedding, and with the blessing of God, Jessie, you will sail away, across the sea, to make a new home in the land where your mother made hers years ago. Do you never think how her prayers all along are being answered for you? You have seen trouble and poverty, but it has disciplined, not injured you."

I have seen everything to make me a grate-

ful girl since that morning you saw mother and me, tired and discouraged, without knowing where we could live or how."

"How well I remember that day myself. Well, I must go now, Jessie, but when you find time come up to my house and talk with Mrs. Flemming; she will be greatly interested in all your affairs."

It was certainly true that Louise did have a lively interest in Jessie's prospects, but after all it was Miss Janet who became so engaged in the matter that Mr. Flemming teased her unmercifully. He called her a match-maker, he accused her of romantic proclivities, and suggested that if she once let her capabilities in that way be known, her Home would be the haven of countless young maidens and artful spinsters. Miss Janet laughed good naturedly and went her way. Her own business plans, consultations with architects about the new building, and enlarged schemes of benevolence, were varied by little friendly

chats with Jessie about what she must have for an outfit, suitable, and not too long in preparation — when the marriage should take place, and fifty other absorbing questions.

Don heard of all the proposed changes with great delight. To cross the ocean was an event so interesting to anticipate, that he cared little what came after. He confessed that he should regret to leave his friends (and every one who knew Don was his friend,) but if he might take Kaiser, he would follow Jessie to the end of the world.

When James Robertson learned of the Scotch letter, which had so altered Jessie's mind, he was naturally exceedingly happy; but it pleased both Mr. Flemming and Miss Page to observe that the fact of Jessie's newly acquired possessions did not seem to give her the least more value in his eyes, but he chiefly rejoiced in her good fortune because it removed her objection to marrying him, and made her content

Indeed, Mr. Robertson now playfully objected to taking back an "heiress" to his "family," lest they should accuse him of marrying "for money."

Meanwhile the early summer days slipped by, until there came one perfect in sunshine, beautiful enough for the happiest wedding. In a quiet room of the Home there gathered a simple little group of Jessie's friends. They were mainly the women and girls living in the house, but they were sincere in their friendship for the bright young girl. They had made the room pretty with summer flowers, and had united to give Jessie a parting gift, a travelling case, nicely fitted up with useful articles. Miss Page was there with a beautiful Bible, the best of many well chosen gifts. Louise and her baby completed the informal company, gathered about the attractive young couple. Mr. Flemming married them, and in a heartfelt prayer commended them to the watchful care of their

Heavenly Father, as they started that day together across the sea, and out on the journey of life.

Following the ceremony came a collation, arranged by Louise, and then came the good-by to the Home. Jessie ran up for a last look at her little room, standing on the threshold to wish that the next inmate might carry away from it as happy a heart when it came time to go out as Jessie that day carried. Then the carriages came, and into one went the bride and groom, Don, and no less a companion than Kaiser. Wearing a new collar and chain, he bore himself with great dignity. In the other carriage went the Flemmings and Miss Page, down to the steamer, bound for Glasgow.

They lingered on the boat for a little while, then Mr. Flemming bade the ladies who were not going to Scotland return to New York.

Jessie crept near to Miss Janet and Louise,

whispering: "I shall probably never see you again, but all my life I shall thank God that I ever knew you. You were so good to my poor brother and to my sick mother; you pointed each of us to the Saviour, you gave us a home and food. Everything good has come to me through you. It was Mrs. Flemming even who put the thought into my mind to write to Scotland."

Miss Janet's heart beat gratefully as she looked in the young wife's beautiful face; but she turned to Don, saying: "If I have done anything of this, Jessie, here is the preacher who taught me first how selfish a life I was living, "not to care" for my neighbors. Now remember, Jessie, you have promised to send Don to me, if when he is older, he wants to return to America. You know he is not a Scotchman."

Mr. Flemming then hurried his party away, and in a few moments the great steamer

moved slowly from the pier. Before the sun reached the meridian, it had passed from sight.

Miss Janet was happy that day, for the echo of Jessie's words was sweet.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

MRS. FLEMMING had given the main facts of poor Kitty's story to her cousin, and both ladies felt for her much sympathy. They would have liked it if Kitty could have been induced to return to the Home, but this they could not prevail upon her to do. However, there was no danger now that Kitty would be led away by gay company; she had lost all heart for those things that once so amused her. She boarded with a plain hard-working woman, who was glad to have her live with her; for Kitty could sew at home, and see that an invalid child of the woman did not suffer for want of care in the mother's absence.

Miss Page was soon able to send Kitty some plain sewing; and both she and Louise did their best to cheer her. Neither of them had supposed Kitty capable of so intense a love as she showed for her unworthy husband; but the hope of finding him now, seemed her one inspiration; and when she lost faith in his affection for her, nothing could arouse her to an interest in life. Miss Page had not in her own mind the least doubt but that this husband had deserted Kitty in cool villany; while Louise, who knew more of the man himself from the hints Kitty had given her, could easily account for his sudden disappearance on other grounds. It was rather poor consolation to suggest that he might be serving a term in some prison, and had run away that night to escape the officers of the law; but Kitty preferred this view of the case to the supposition that he had deserted her voluntarily.

It was a little strange, considering her

husband's reticence on the subject, that Kitty should have brooded so much over fancies of his father and mother. For no apparent reason she had become possessed with the idea that both were living, and that both were good people, beloved by the son, who perhaps shunned them that he might not dishonor their name.

One day, as Kitty was looking over a few things of her husband's, she came to a torn envelope which had evidently once been addressed, but not stamped.

It was directed to a small town, called N—— in G—— County, Connecticut, and addressed to Mrs. James Hazard. Now Kitty had heard Jim often say that he was named after his father, and her first thought was: "I know at last where his mother lives, and I will write to her;" but when she began to meditate what she would say, it seemed such a long story that she did not know where to begin. A letter is always a

formidable undertaking to a person of little experience in writing.

"And when I have written it all out," she said to herself, "they will not understand why I have done it. They may think I want them to support me, or something of that sort. All I want is to know some one who knew and loved him. I have a mind to go to this place and see them myself. It can't be but a few hours' ride from New York."

This last idea filled Kitty's mind night and day. At last she went to ask Mrs. Flemming's advice, but did not find her home. That same day, Kitty was paid an unusually good price for a piece of sewing, and she resolved to start off, saying nothing to the woman with whom she lived, as to her object; but merely explaining that she had friends whom she wished to consult.

It was noon of a beautiful summer day when Kitty left the city, and with a heart full

of fear, hope and expectancy, started on her quest of friends.

Her clothing had by this time become very shabby; but she was invariably neat, and her face, always attractive, had acquired in these months of trouble an expression that was very sweet and touching. More than one of her fellow travellers wondered who she was, and where she was going—what made her seem so womanly and sad, while yet so youthful. About six o'clock Kitty reached the little station and learned that the village stretched away to the West, although, to call the scattered farms and pretty cottages a village, seemed to her queer. A man at the station told Kitty, that "Uncle Jimmy Hazard," lived in the last house on the Parker road, and he pointed out where this was; a tiny yellow house far off toward the glowing sunset—a mile or more away.

Kitty started down the road, vaguely relieved to find that no fine house had been

shown her, and glad that people called her husband's father "Uncle." The title had a homely, friendly sound. It was a lovely evening, and in spite of the load on her mind, Kitty could not but enjoy the balmy air, fragrant with sweet odors from the fresh fields. She passed pleasant houses, where children played about the open doors, and old people sat resting on wide piazzas.

Excitement quickened her steps, and soon Kitty came near enough to see that the little yellow story and a-half house was sheltered by great elm trees; that at one side was an old-fashioned well with its sweep, at the other a garden full of flowers, growing among the vegetables, while behind the house stretched away field beyond field. The kitchen door stood open, and on the stone before it lay an old and solemn dog, who lifted his head as Kitty opened the wooden gate. When she came near, he arose, but did not growl or hinder her from approaching. Standing on

the stone, Kitty looked into a room, cosy as only the cosiest country kitchen can be. The wooden chairs were spotless; that part of the floor not covered with strips of home-made carpet was scrubbed as white as the chairs. Two big chintz-covered chairs stood by two windows, open to the sunset, a work-basket set on one casement, a blue pitcher of gay flowers on the other. Every pan, dish and kitchen utensil in sight was polished to the last degree; but no living creature was there except a great sleek gray cat, purring on the red cushion of a lounge that filled one side of the room.

Kitty felt for a certain paper in her pocket, and glanced at the plain gold ring on her little rough hand; then as much at a loss how she should introduce herself, as if she had not planned fifty ways, she tapped on the kitchen door. The old dog had sniffed at her dress and walked around her, had licked her fingers and laid himself down again before any

one came; and then not at her summons. An opposite door opened, and a mild faced, white-haired old woman in a clean calico gown, with a long black apron and a white neck handkerchief, appeared. She came into the middle of the room before she saw Kitty, who, in a voice she did not herself recognize or seem to own, asked for a glass of water.

"Certainly; come in," said the old lady, taking a glass off the neat "dresser," and filling it from a pitcher close at hand.

"I came from the cars—and I am thirsty and out of breath," faltered Kitty.

"I see you are, and you look real pale; hadn't you better sit down and rest a spell?"

Glad of any excuse to stop, Kitty sat in the big soft chair the old lady pulled forward, and said, "I came from the city, and everything looks fresh and beautiful to me."

"No doubt it does. The city is a hot, dreadful place in the summer. I believe, as somebody said, that God made the country,

and I think people get farther away from Him in the city that man made," sighed the woman, with such a look in her eyes that Kitty's own suddenly filled with tears. She was sure this was Jim's mother, and that she was thinking of Jim.

"Are you in trouble, child?" asked the old woman, suddenly, looking full in Kitty's face, and then down at her neat poor clothing.

"I am trying to find friends who are strangers," said Kitty, and I don't know how they will receive me."

"If it is anybody about here, dear, that you are looking for, maybe I can help you. Father and I know everybody near, if they are old settlers—and not many new folks come."

Kitty began her own story, or as much of it as would let the woman know later why she had appeared thus unannounced. She told of her past; briefly of her marriage, her trouble, and the listener began to be so interested, she quite forgot that Kitty was look-

ing for any friends, and did not even notice that she had not given her husband's name, until Kitty herself came to speak of her anxiety to see his mother.

"You don't say, child, that your husband was from this village, do you?" suddenly cried the woman, turning pale. "What was his name?"

"Yes; and here is my marriage certificate," replied Kitty, quickly. "Here is his name, James Hazard."

The old lady uttered a loud exclamation; then dropping the paper in her lap, stared at Kitty's face, down which the tears were running.

"Do you know where you are, and who I am?"

"Yes—yes, you are Jim's mother; and can't you tell me where to find him?"

The love and grief in the cry conquered any distrust, if indeed the mother felt any, and she caught Kitty's hand, embracing her

with tears, questions and ejaculations. In the half hour that followed Kitty learned much, and told all she had to tell. It was the old story of a prodigal son breaking his parent's heart, and yet because of certain traits in him they had clung to him with a love which Kitty, at least, could understand.

"He was a good boy and a good son, until the first grog-shop was set up in the place," wailed the mother. "There he went to hear the village news, and there the devil caught him."

Some one scraped the threshold with a heavy boot, and looking up, Kitty saw an old man enter, bent and gray-haired, but with eyes and features so like her husband's, that she could only lean back in her chair and sob hysterically, while his wife excitedly explained what it all meant.

He listened without a word; then going to the light with the marriage certificate, he read that through slowly and carefully. Kitty, in

fear at his silence, calmed herself, waiting until he turned and looked at her as carefully; then, his voice trembling a good deal, he questioned her, going over again what he had been told so confusedly. Finally he said:

"You look like a good girl, and I am afraid our boy has made you suffer, as he has made us suffer; but if you love him, and mean to cling to him, maybe you can help him—I don't know, though. If he can't reform for the sake of his gray-haired mother—don't think a young face will hold him!"

When Kitty, bursting again into tears, cried: "I did not hold him—I am telling you that!"

He replied: "Why there, poor child, I did not mean to hurt you. You are welcome; we will take you in, and if you are worthy of it, we will make you one of us."

Kitty hastily broke in with the assertion that she had always worked for herself, and was not asking help; but the old lady, by

this time more composed, took off her bonnet, and learning she had eaten no supper, bustled about to bring her a heaped-up plate of inviting food.

For the first time in years, the old people sat up until eleven o'clock that night, and before Kitty went to her soft bed, in the dainty little chamber assigned her, they had given her their entire confidence. A more worldly couple, might have been more distrustful; but Kitty's beauty, and her sad story, above all her love for Jim, conquered them. Next day it was settled that Kitty should stay until she was "rested;" for the few hours' journey she had taken, seemed very fatiguing to them; then the old people would have her return to the city, settle her affairs, leave word with her friends in regard to Jim (should he ever seek her), and this done, come back to them. Her young hands and feet could save the mother's old and weary ones, while

their hearts would open and take her in, as did their home.

"It seems to me, I would be in heaven if Jim were only here," said Kitty, the second day, coming in from the garden, with her hands full of flowers, and bending to kiss the old lady.

"If Jim were here with a new heart, Kitty! Oh how I have prayed for that boy of mine, that the Lord would not let him go unsaved. Night and day I have plead for him."

* * * * * *

A few days after the events last narrated, Louise was just leaving home one morning for a walk. The door had closed behind her, when a man put his foot on the lowest step, and looking up, raised his hat respectfully, searching her face as he did so attentively. He was tall, thin, decently dressed, but deathly pale. The man's features were fine his eyes too keen to be pleasant; but when he spoke his voice was agreeable:

"Is this Mrs. Flemming?"

Louise replied briefly, and waited for his next words. Scarcely a day passed that some "gentleman" or "lady," did not call to ask a favor, having heard of "the Ladies' Christian Charity." Sometimes it was to beg twenty cents, "to get to relatives in Hoboken;" sometimes a sewing-machine was desired, occasionally a piano, or passage money to California. It was therefore somewhat of a surprise to Mrs. Flemming when the man said:

"Do you remember a young woman who boarded in the Home in — street a year ago? Her name was Kitty Prior."

Louise replied that she remembered the person he meant.

"Can you tell me where she is now to be found?" he asked, watching her sharply.

It flashed into her mind that this might be Kitty's husband; but she answered guardedly.

"Kitty Prior married and went West last September."

"I know it, but I have heard that she had returned, and I thought you might know if she were in New York. I am a near relative—"

"Are you James Hazard?"

"Yes. You have seen Kitty then! Is she in New York?"

"You ought to know where your own wife is. Did you marry her to leave her to take care of herself?"

"No, I swear to you I didn't; and if ever a man tried to find a woman, I have tried to find her for the last few months, until six weeks ago; then I was taken to the hospital just alive with pneumonia, and to-day I am out for the first time."

Louise could well believe this last statement, for he trembled so, even now, with weakness or excitement, that he clung to the railing of the steps for support.

"Why did you leave her in the first place?"

"Have you any idea why? Has she guessed why? for I see she has told you her story," he exclaimed, with caution, even in his evident eagerness.

"Yes, she has told me, but no one else, that she imagined you might have run away from the police."

"She was right, it was that;" he returned, entirely unembarrassed by the confession. "I did run away. I was in a tight place, where a minute's delay would have lost me my chance of escape, and I knew poor Kitty would make a scene. I expected to get word to her, or to join her in a day or two; but—I could not do it. It is not best to tell why; but when I explain to Kitty, she will believe me. When I was free—that is, when I could look her up, she had disappeared. I came to New York, hoping she too had turned this way. I got the pneumonia before I could find a trace of her. Now Mrs. Flemming,

did Kitty say I was ever anything but good to her? I loved her, and she had reason to know I would not desert her."

"Yes, I know where Kitty is, and she does love you; but I am afraid she deserves a better husband."

"You never said a truer word than that; but if I have a decent thing about me, I often think it is the feeling I have for that poor girl. I am going to try to go it on the straight, after this."

"Why didn't you tell Kitty where your mother or your family relatives lived? Then, when she was left friendless, in a strange city, she would not have been as likely to starve," said Louise, who could not refrain from a little severity toward this man, who evaded her question by asking with anxiety not assumed:

"Has Kitty suffered?"

"She has suffered, terribly. She confess-

ed to me, that she once thought of drowning herself."

"Tell me where she is?" he broke out, with such energy that Louise, relented, and answered: "She is sewing for her daily bread, and boards at No. 8— Ninth Avenue."

With hurried thanks Jim Hazard turned, and as Louise saw him taking rapid strides toward the west, she experienced conflicting sentiments; real pleasure in thinking of Kitty's joy, deep disapproval of the man's past conduct, and a kinder feeling toward him in view of his love for his wife, than she otherwise could have allowed herself.

Several times during the day she wondered how Kitty had received him, and what their future would be.

What was her surprise, about four o'clock, to have Jim Hazard call again at the house and ask to see her. As soon as she appeared, he exclaimed:

"I cannot find her. She went from that

place three days ago, saying she had business out of the city; but that she would be back soon. She left a few things—all she had, and said she should probably be back the next day; but she did not tell the woman where she was going."

"Where do your people live?" asked Louise, simply.

For the first time the color mounted to the man's colorless cheeks.

"They live near to the city, but they are respectable, quiet, old people. I never have told any one where they are; so my doings cannot be reported. I've been a hard case, as you know, or must suppose; but my folks are decent. I always meant to take Kitty to them; but I had reasons for not telling her where they were before this. I wanted no police dogging them, and trying to get out of them what they never knew."

"Well, Kitty has long been trying to find them, if she could not find you. She told

me that, and by my advice, she tells no one else of her affairs. Perhaps she has gone to your people."

"I don't believe it. She had no clew to them."

Louise at that moment noticing how feeble he looked, offered him some refreshment. He declined it; but she insisted, and he admitted that he felt scarcely able to stand. While Dolly prepared him a cup of coffee, he told Mrs. Flemming that he had money enough to take him home, and there he meant to go. He begged her to keep watch for Kitty, and if any news of her could be sent, to let him know.

"Perhaps Kitty herself will be with my mother; but I don't think that is probable. If she comes, tell her to come right to me, for I am too weak to get back to this city, under a week, or more." Then hesitating, he gave Mrs. Flemming the address of his father, in the small village of Connecticut

"I think you had better not leave the city until morning," she said; "then you can sleep here to-night and start early."

"You are very kind. After I left the hospital to-day, I had a slight attack of bleeding. I don't hardly think it was from the lungs, but it weakened me fearfully. Still I have money to get lodgings, and why should you give shelter to a rogue?" he returned, giving a peculiar glance about the room. "Are you not afraid of me?"

"I am afraid for you, if you are a rogue; but you would be the meanest one I ever met if you turned the kindness I have given your wife, and the help I would give you, into an occasion to do me or mine harm."

"I am not mean enough for it now," he replied, meekly.

Louise saw him refreshed by food, and then when he thanked her for her offer of a night's shelter, yet declared he would not accept it, but would get half way home that night,

she thought it a good chance to talk to him. She assumed what she supposed true, that he was a bad man, and she reasoned with him on the folly of sin, on the long-suffering of God, on the law of God—on the love of Christ.

He heard her quietly. Once he seemed moved, and before he went away he told her briefly more of himself than he had ever told poor Kitty. He confessed he had been the only son of Christian parents, and in his youth had attended church and Sunday-school. When a mere lad he had fallen in with a set of older boys who took him to saloons, taught him to play games of chance for small winnings, and gave him cheap novels to read. He was in a few years far more advanced than his teachers in all small vices. He was a marvellously quick fellow in every way; a mimic, could change voice and expression at will. When the little town became too narrow for him, he ran away. Ten years in

New York made him what he was; a gambler and a thief. To this last character he did not lay claim, but Louise understood some of his remarks in the light of Kitty's previous revelations.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN "AFAR OFF."

ONE morning, a few days after Kitty had sought and found friends in the little yellow farm-house, James Hazard turned his face that same way. Very few and far between had been his visits to his father's house in the years since he had gone astray. The comrades with whom he used to play in the little corner school-house would hardly have known him had he greeted them that morning, as he strolled along the "Parker road;" but to guard against recognition, Jim turned his head when a team passed him. He was well dressed; he had a little money in his pocket; he had means of getting more; but as he looked across the fields and saw the farm-

ers there at work, he thought how evenly, how honestly their lives had probably gone on, leaving clean, happy memories—promising a calm old age of honor and contentment. All that had seemed so intensely stupid to him once, but somehow, under this blue sky, with the songs of birds in his ear, with the home of his childhood in sight, a dim light seemed to dawn on his spiritual darkness. It was a light that did not cheer, but what was better, it showed him faintly to himself and revealed the evil behind him. Weary as never before after so little physical exertion, he sat for a while under a hedge, to recover breath. A splendid constitution, inherited from a line of moral and healthy ancestors, had enabled James Hazard to do and to endure almost anything; but now he felt that a child could overthrow him. The warm air made him drowsy, and half waking, half dreaming, he recalled the old times. He was a little boy, going to church with his mother, and old par-

son Miller, at rest these twenty years in the quiet graveyard, was quoting Ecclesiastes: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not God."—Yes, the minister was saying that, and little Jim Hazard was listening, with the fancy that his heart was young and pure, that all life was before him, long and full of hope and promise.—Now he was there in the old church, which was full of shadowy people whom he had known as good when living, but who died years ago.—These stood gazing at him in horror; and the old minister was telling of all the wicked deeds of the man Jim Hazard. Darkness seemed

sifting down over them all, and his mother and father cowered down in grief and shame.

A cart rattled past on the road, and Jim awoke, oppressed for breath. A long coughing fit attacked him, and again he raised a little blood, which so weakened him that the effort to walk on cost him great difficulty. The little house was in sight, however, and he toiled along toward the open gate. There he waited, leaning on it to watch a moment for some sign that his mother and his father still lived. In a distant field he saw a man at work, old and bent, and he recognized his father; then through an open window he saw a woman's head, whereon the hair was white as snow. For the first time in years Jim Hazard's eyes overflowed with tears.

At that moment Kitty crossed the kitchen, came to the door, and standing there, framed in it, she looked off over the fields to the distant woods, while her husband stared at her, unable to believe that he actually saw her.

When she saw him, he was still standing there, half fainting, with his hand stretched toward her. The loud cry she gave brought his mother, hastening after Kitty, who was even then at the gate, wild with joy at sight of the new comer, and the moment after equally frightened at his weakness and pallor.

The excited women supported him into the house, where he dropped on the kitchen lounge, and asked and answered questions.

To childish, impulsive Kitty, that was a day of almost unalloyed happiness. Her husband was in his own home; he loved her, had declared that he never meant to desert her; his parents had welcomed her as a daughter; best of all, Jim was very sorry for all the grief he had caused them, and now he would, beyond a doubt, do right henceforward. So argued pretty Kitty, while there seemed a song in her heart as sweet as the bird's carol outside the window that summer day.

In the parents' thoughts bitter reflections

mingled with the joy felt over his return. They saw, as the old see, over a wider outlook. At full manhood their boy was an outcast. There was no reason why men should respect him. Was there any hope that he would come where God could forgive him? The old father's heart was as tender as the mother's toward their only child, yet that night, when they talked of him before they slept, as they had done sadly for fifteen years and more—the father made no reply when she asked if he did not think Jim's health was all gone. To himself he said: "If I knew he had repented of his sins, and God had saved his soul, I should feel a great load off my heart were Jim in his grave."

In the weeks that followed, Kitty learned very little about the details of her husband's flight and subsequent experiences. He had been arrested, held for trial, and escaped for lack of evidence against him—escaped the punishment of a crime he had very likely com-

mitted. He naturally enough avoided such topics of conversation, and Kitty did not force his confidence. Indeed she did not have much thought of anything beyond the present and his health. In a short time it became evident that he was a doomed man; frequent hemorrhages from the lungs reduced him rapidly, and he himself realized his physical condition.

From the first, his aged mother had talked and prayed and read her Bible to him, exactly as she had done, when he—the thief, drinker and gambler, had been her obedient child. He heard her without a protest; being his mother, he knew that she could not do otherwise. One day, toward the latter part of the summer, he had Kitty write a note to Mr. Flemming, asking him to come out for a private interview with him. A strange interview it was, and one Mr. Flemming long remembered. Jim told him that he had sent for him to make him his confessor; that in a very few cases, where it might be possible

to make some restitution, Mr. Flemming could give the defrauded persons the benefit of Jim's revelation. The greater part of the evil he had wrought must stand. Nothing he could now do or tell, would undo it. For instance, he had been the prime mover in the burglary of Miss Janet's house. But the goods then stolen had long since been melted, pawned, scattered to the four winds.

"I tell you enough for you or these others to send me straight to the penitentiary," he commented with perfect indifference. "But it is hardly worth any trouble to stir in the matter. The State would scarcely get me there, before there would be the bother of burying me, and my own people can do that."

The only feeling he showed, was in saying to Mr. Flemming, that he might tell to his father or mother, later, just as much of his confession as it was necessary they should know; but he would gladly save them from

more shame than they had suffered in the past.

When Mr. Flemming, "reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come," Jim listened respectfully and thanked him, sending a message to Miss Page and another to Mrs. Flemming. Of the wrong he had done toward others—all that wherein he had failed toward his parents, Jim seemed fully conscious, and in the latter case, at least, deeply penitent; but of his attitude toward God, whose divine laws he had broken, whose love he had slighted, whose mercy despised, Jim said nothing for many days and weeks.

One quiet Sunday afternoon, however, when the family were sitting together in the door way, he said to his mother:

"What seems to you best in your Bible, mother?"

"Christ's promises and Christ's parables."

"But the parables are not told for facts, are they?"

"They are pictures of the truth, and just like the truth. When you were a little fellow, Jim," continued the old lady, "you used to like that daguerreotype of me in the sitting-room, and when I was away once visiting, your father said you trotted around with it all day, calling it me. Now there is a verse and a parable in the Bible that seem to me like a picture of the God whom I love and worship. The verse is 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;' and this is the parable."

Her Bible laid open on her lap. Turning its leaves, she read in her tremulous voice, that story that will never cease to touch the hardest hearts until the last prodigal son shall have ceased to sin, and have come to himself. When she ended, and taking off her glasses, wiped her dim eyes, Jim, clearing his throat, said:

"I have been a prodigal, God knows; and I have spent half my life among swine. I

am ashamed now to come whining back with the very dregs of my life, and ask for His mercy. Even this one you read of, had a chance before him to prove he was not a hypocrite, only repenting because he had no life left. He could work on in the future. Look at me, here—done up for this world—no chance to help father in his old age, no hope of being a comfort to you after all these years of misery, that I have caused you. Not a day's work in me for Kitty's support. Never a hope of undoing what I have done to injure others out in the world. Do you think it is for me, now, to come asking God to forgive me?"

"Oh, my boy! Jim! Jim!" cried his mother. "Don't you suppose God is more ready to have 'compassion,' on you, than your own father? I tell you, he sees you a long way off, and if you are sorry and ashamed, just tell Him so!"

"You don't begin to know how bad I have been, mother!"

"You don't begin to know, my son, how merciful God is!"

"Then pray for me, and I will just say, 'Lord be merciful to me the meanest sinner that ever came crawling back without power to sin any longer.' But if I could have my life back again, God helping me," he exclaimed, half rising in his energy, "I would not be the blind fool I have been! Oh Kitty, let my mother teach you how to live! You are young—stay with her and father as long as either lives."

"Kitty has promised to be my child," said the old lady, smoothing the soft hair on Kitty's head—Kitty who was sobbing so she could not speak. A little later he pointed his thin finger toward the town, saying:

'There is the old church, where Parson Miller used to say the 'wicked should not live out half his days.' It was true. There is

Hewlet's saloon, where I learned to drink, and took lessons in gambling, swearing, and things you never dreamed. You were not to blame. Until Hewlet began to sell liquor in that place, the boys about here were as good as gold. Over in that west lot, I used to hide with a few of them, behind a shed, and play cards, when you supposed I was in the corner school-house. Yes sir, if you want to have a station on the straight road to perdition, in any little country place, just start a grocery, selling liquor, and travel will begin."

* * * * * * *

The summer ended. One lovely day, when the first autumn leaves were dropping softly through the golden air, a funeral procession passed from the old yellow farm house to the shaded grave yard. James Hazard, the prodigal son, was laid under the sod, before his gray-haired father and his gentle old mother had passed from earth to

heaven. But in the hearts of both parents was a peace that rose above their grief, lifting them out of it into a region of faith and satisfying trust. Never again should they sit by a dreary hearth, thinking that somewhere, their only boy was defying God's laws, and laying up wrath against a day of wrath. If he had sinned, he had repented. After years of weeping and prayer, God had given that mother the blessed hope of meeting her boy in heaven. What wonder then that she could not feel the passionate grief of Kitty; yet who so well could be Kitty's comforter now, her guide and her mother.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END.

WE began our story, with Miss Janet's old house. We must end it with the statement, that all things have become new. In fact it is with her house as with her own character; much of the old material is in each; but many are the changes for the better, wonderful the added worth and grace.

After Miss Page's talk with Mr. Flemming, in regard to her plans for the future, and her ideas about the management of affairs after her death, she said nothing more to him until he himself returned to the subject. After long thought, and a struggle, which even Miss Janet could not appreciate, he resolved to give himself to mission work among the poor,

the ignorant and the degraded, particularly to temperance work.

Meanwhile, there arose on the site of the dance-hall, a building whose every stone was laid with faith and prayer. When it was complete, so that every branch of the work could be carried on with greater ease, the results of the past year's labor became apparent. Men and women, rescued from vice, came forward to be in their turn workers. Needy women, blessing Miss Page as their benefactor, having found work and homes, sent her back thank-offerings, and told others where they might go when no one cared for their souls or bodies.

Years came, and years went. Contrary to her impressions, Miss Janet's life was spared, until her work had grown far beyond her own knowledge, and she herself had become like one of old: "grounded in true humility, and full of divine charity," so that she seemed "always purely and sincerely seeking God's

honor;" and she believed to the end that: "Whatsoever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it will be wholly fruitful. For God weigheth more with how much love a man worketh, than how much he doeth. He worketh much that loveth much."

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